CHAPTER 16
FANGS

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ONE OR TWO TYRANTS

AT ANY GIVEN POINT IN HISTORY.

HE WAS BUT A SIMPLE DAIMYOU IN THE EYES OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE, RULERS OF THE HEAVENS.

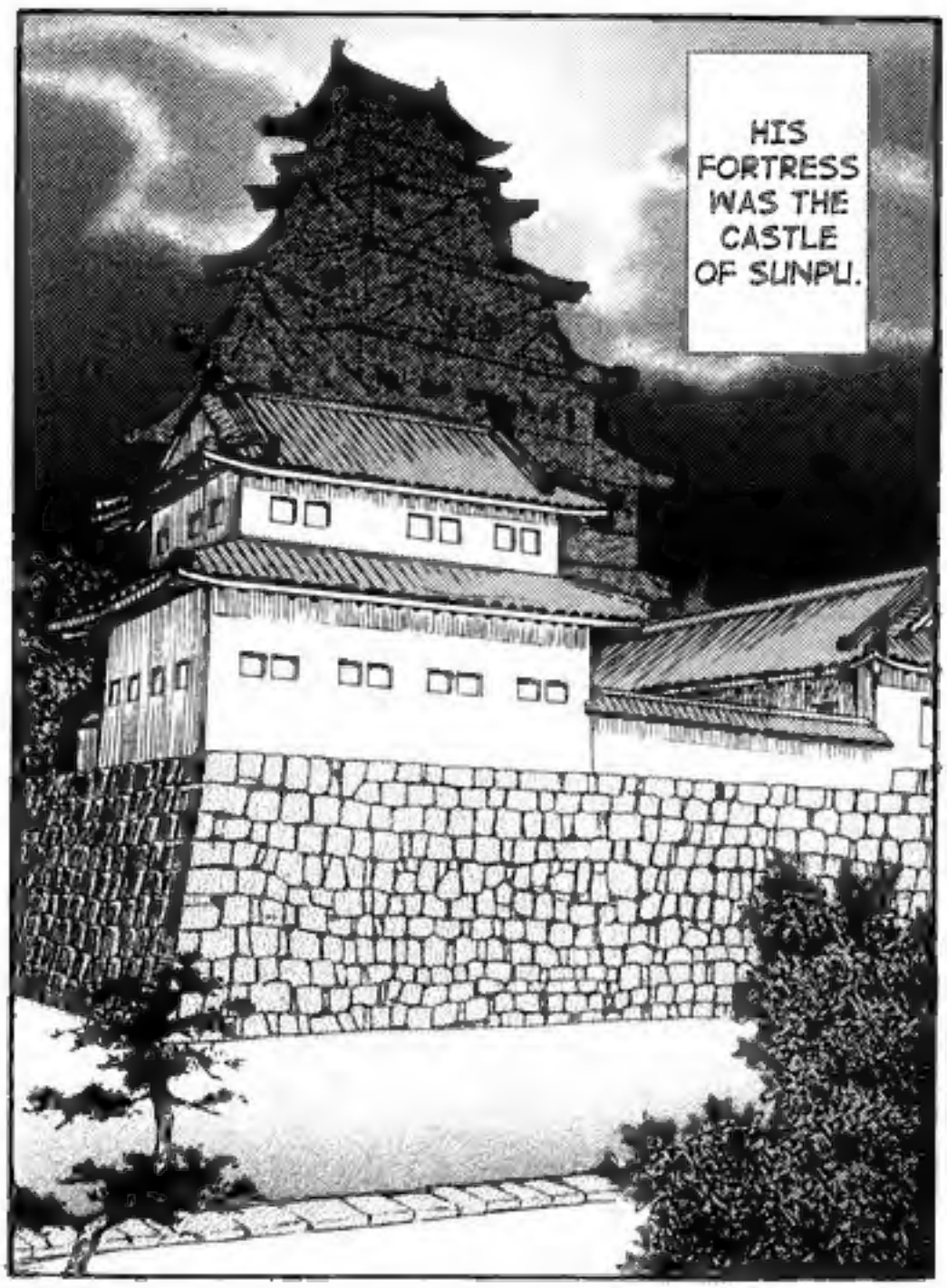
BUT NO MATTER HOW VICE-LIKE A TYRANT'S HOLD WAS

OVER HIS LANDS,

CONFIS-CATING A DAIMYOU'S LANDS AND PUNISHING HIM

WAS NOT DIFFICULT IN THE LEAST.

WHO COULD DARE TO CHASTISE HIM?
HOWEVER,
IF THE BLOOD OF TOKUGAWA IEYASU HIMSELF FLOWED THROUGH THAT TYRANT'S VEINS,


HIS FORTRESS WAS THE CASTLE OF SUNPU.

KAI
KAN'EI SECOND YEAR.
TOKUGAWA TADANAGA'S LANDS SPANNED ALL OF
KAI, SURUGA AND TOUTOMI.
SURUGA
TOUTOMI

*KAN'EI FIFTH YEAR.

SUNPU CASTLE.

*1628

HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO ENTER TADANAGA'S CHAMBERS AND ATTEND TO HIS NEEDS.

ON THAT DAY, SATO, DAUGHTER OF THE LOW-RANKING OFFICIAL TSUDA YAICHIROU,

TO ENSURE THAT SHE WAS NOT HIDING ANY WEAPONS OR MESSAGES ON HER PERSON.

A METICULOUS SERIES OF TESTS WERE PERFORMED BEFORE SHE ENTERED

IT SEEMS NOTHING IS AMISS.

IT WAS NOT A RARE OCCURRENCE FOR A LORD TO TAKE INTEREST NOT ONLY IN THE SERVANTS OF THE NOBLE WOMEN,

BUT IN THE CHILDREN OF COMMONERS AS WELL.

カタ

カタ

TO SATO, THE CLAN OF TOKUGAWA WAS SO AWING

THAT IT INSPIRED ACTUAL TERROR WITHIN HER.

カタ

カタ

MAKE SURE YOU DO NOT ANGER OUR LORD.

SHE WAS A VIRGIN WHO HAD JUST EXPERIENCED MENARCHE.

SATO COULD ONLY BOW HER HEAD TO THE FLOOR AND QUAKE WITH FEAR.

ONCE TADANAGA ENTERED THE ROOM,

CHERISHED MEMORIES ROSE UNBIDDEN IN SATO'S MIND, ONE BY ONE.

AT THAT TIME,

THAT WAS THE TRUTH OF THE PHENO-MENON

WHERE ONE'S LIFE FLASHES BEFORE ONE'S EYES

IN TIMES OF IMMINENT DEATH,

THE HUMAN MIND INSTINC-TIVELY

SEARCHES FOR A WAY TO EVADE THAT REALITY.

THERE WAS NOT ONE SINGLE PERSON IN THE ENTIRE CASTLE

WHO COULD PUT AN END TO TADANAGA'S TYRANNY

A CERTAIN BATTLE HELD DURING
THE TOURNAMENT AT SUNGU CASTLE IN THE SIXTH YEAR OF KANEI

KAN'EI
FIFTH YEAR,

*ENSHUU,
KAKEGAWA.

HOPING TO
SERVE HIM

EVEN AMONG THESE MEN

A BAND OF [illegible] WAS NOTED IN [illegible] PARTICULAR

WERE A ROWDY BAND OF NE'ER-DO-WELLS WHO KILLED INDISCRIM-INATELY

AND WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE CONSE-QUENCES

I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU.

EXCUSE ME, PLEASE WAIT.

WHAT IS IT?

WELL ...

OH, SHAME ON ME. I COMPLETELY FORGOT.

YOU HAVE NOT PAID YET.

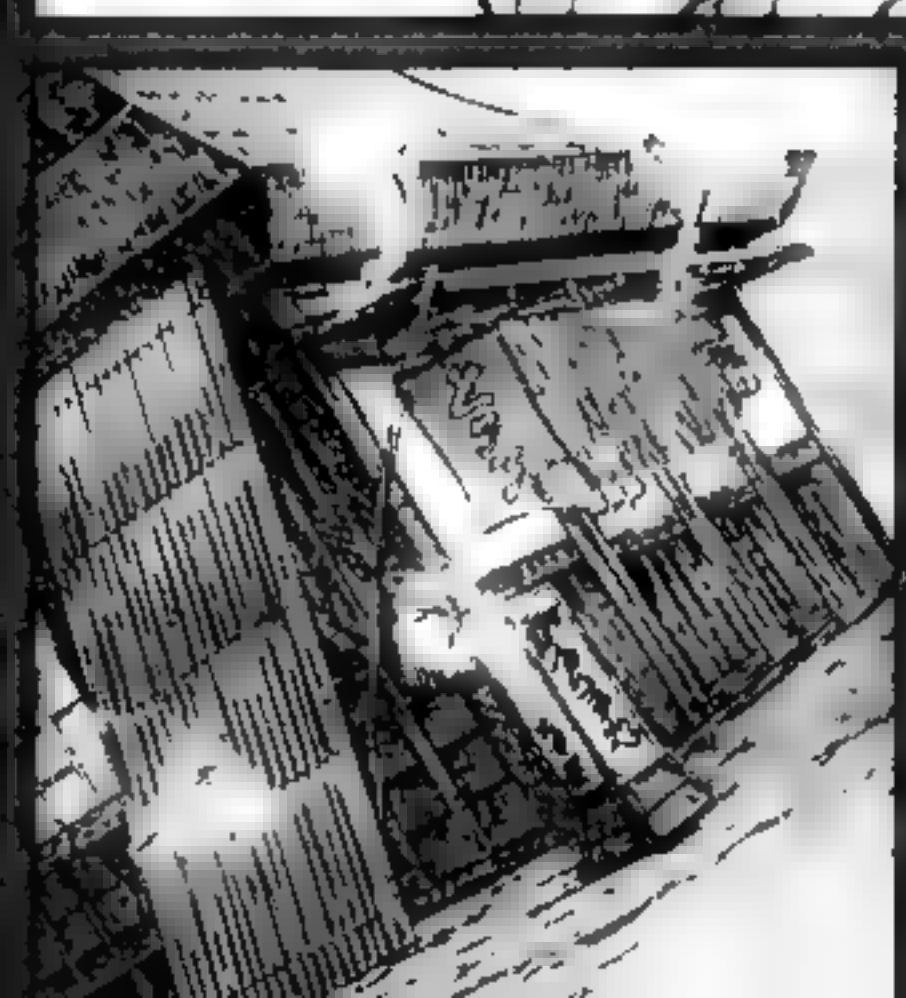
THE MAN WHO SOUGHT TO REIGN IN THESE MEN'S THOUGHTLESS DEEDS

WAS THE CHIVALROUS INNKEEPER, KURODA CHIKARA

KAKIEMON PAID WITH A STEEL FAN.

THEY ARROGANTLY BELIEVED THAT THE OFFICIALS WOULD NOT MOVE AGAINST THEM

BECAUSE THEY HAD KILLED A SINGLE MAN



JUST LIKE LORD NOBUNAGA IT'S SAID THAT TADANAGA-SAMA

WILL TAKE IN EVEN MEN LIKE US, IF ONLY WE SHOW THE ABILITY

THAT'S WHY WE MUST SHOW HIM EVIDENCE.

THE VILLAGE IS FILLED TO BURSTING WITH ROUNIN

EVEN HE COULD NOT POSSIBLY RECEIVE EVERYONE HERE.

BUT THE OTHERS KNOW THIS AS WELL.

ARE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER ROUNIN.

YES, EVIDENCE THAT OUR SKILLS WITH THE BLADE

MMM. THAT'S THE QUICKEST WAY.

LIKE MUSASHI,

WHO CHALLENGED THE CLAN OF YOSHIOKA TO PROVE HIS WORTH.

THEN, OUR PREY?

SEEMS THAT THIS SCHOOL CALLED KOGAN-RYUU IS THE MOST FAMOUS AROUND THESE PARTS

WHAT KIND OF TWO-BIT COUNTRY BUMPKIN DISCIPLINE IS THIS

KOGAN-RYUU?

THE MASTER, IWAMOTO KOGAN,

AND HIS DAUGHTER ARE BOTH INSANE.

WELL, IT'S SAID THAT

HAH!

SOUNDS LIKE IT'S NOT A BUMPKIN'S SCHOOL. IT'S THE SCHOOL OF MADMEN!

THEY SAY THE ONE CALLED USHIMATA IS A SIMPLETON,

AND THE ONE CALLED FUJIKI IS DUMB.

AND OF THE TWO MASTERS,

SAY
THAT
AGAIN!

IT WAS THE YOUNGEST DISCIPLE OF [illegible] BY [illegible] THE [illegible]TEEN YEAR OLD

KONDOU SUZUNOSUKE HIS BANGS YET HUNG IMPISHLY IN HIS EYES.

ARE YOU OF KOGAN -RYULI?

WHAT'S WITH THAT HAIR, EH?

HERE, LET'S SEE IF YOU'VE EVEN GOT AN ADAM'S APPLE.

THOUGH YOUNG THE BOY WAS A FINE DISCIPLE OF KOGAN-RYUU.

HIS BLADE FLASHED THROUGH THE AIR LIKE A BLINDING RAY OF SUNLIGHT.

AT THE SAME TIME,

AND DENKI'S ZANBATOU STOPPED AT HIS NECK

KAMAEMON AIMED FOR HIS THROAT, HASEBE FOR HIS SOLAR PLEXUS

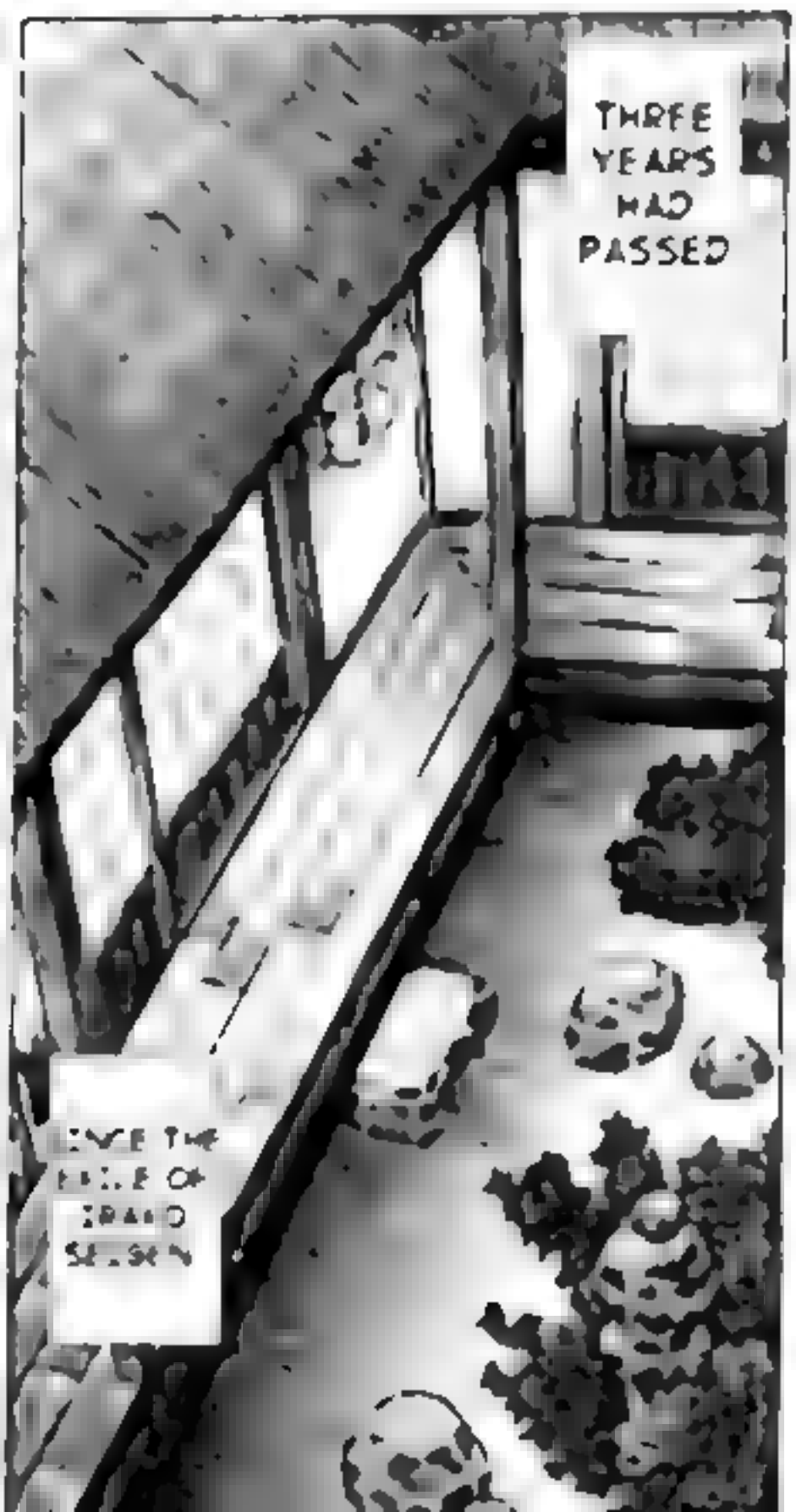
WHILE SAMANOSUKE DREW A WICKED AND LONG LENGTH OF CHAIN

AND

JIRON'S THROWING KNIVES FOUND THEIR TARGET BETWEEN SUJINOSUKE'S EYES

THEN THERE WAS THE SMELL OF SANDA MIYAGA!

LICENSED PRACTITIONER OF SHIN MUSOU HAYASHIZAKI -RYUU


THRFE
YEARS
HAD
PASSED

FORGIVE ME, SHIHAN.

NOT ONLY DID I, SUZUNOSUKE, BRING THIS BATTLE UPON KOGAN-RYUU,

BUT I ALSO PLEDGED A VOW TO DUEL.

WHO SAID TO BRING A WITNESS TO JINBA PASS

AT SUNSET.

THE ENEMY NUMBERS SEVEN RONIN.

SUZU...

SUZU!!

I WILL DEFEAT EVERY ONE OF THEM, WIELDING ONLY THIS SWORD! I PLEDGE MY LIFE ON IT.

PLEASE, FORGIVE ME

YOU HAVE DONE WELL!

AS A BEAST WOULD BEAR ITS FANGS

THE ACT OF SMILING WAS ORIGINALLY A SHOW OF AGGRESSION

FANGS

COLLAPSE OF THE LUNGS DUE TO CRUSHED RIBS

SUFFOCATION CAUSED BY ENTRAPMENT OF THE CHIN INTO THE THROAT

WITH HIS
BARE HAN

I DO NOT NEED A WEAPON WHEN FACING STRAY DOGS.

TO THINK THAT A DRAGON WOULD BE HIDING IN KAKEGAWA . .

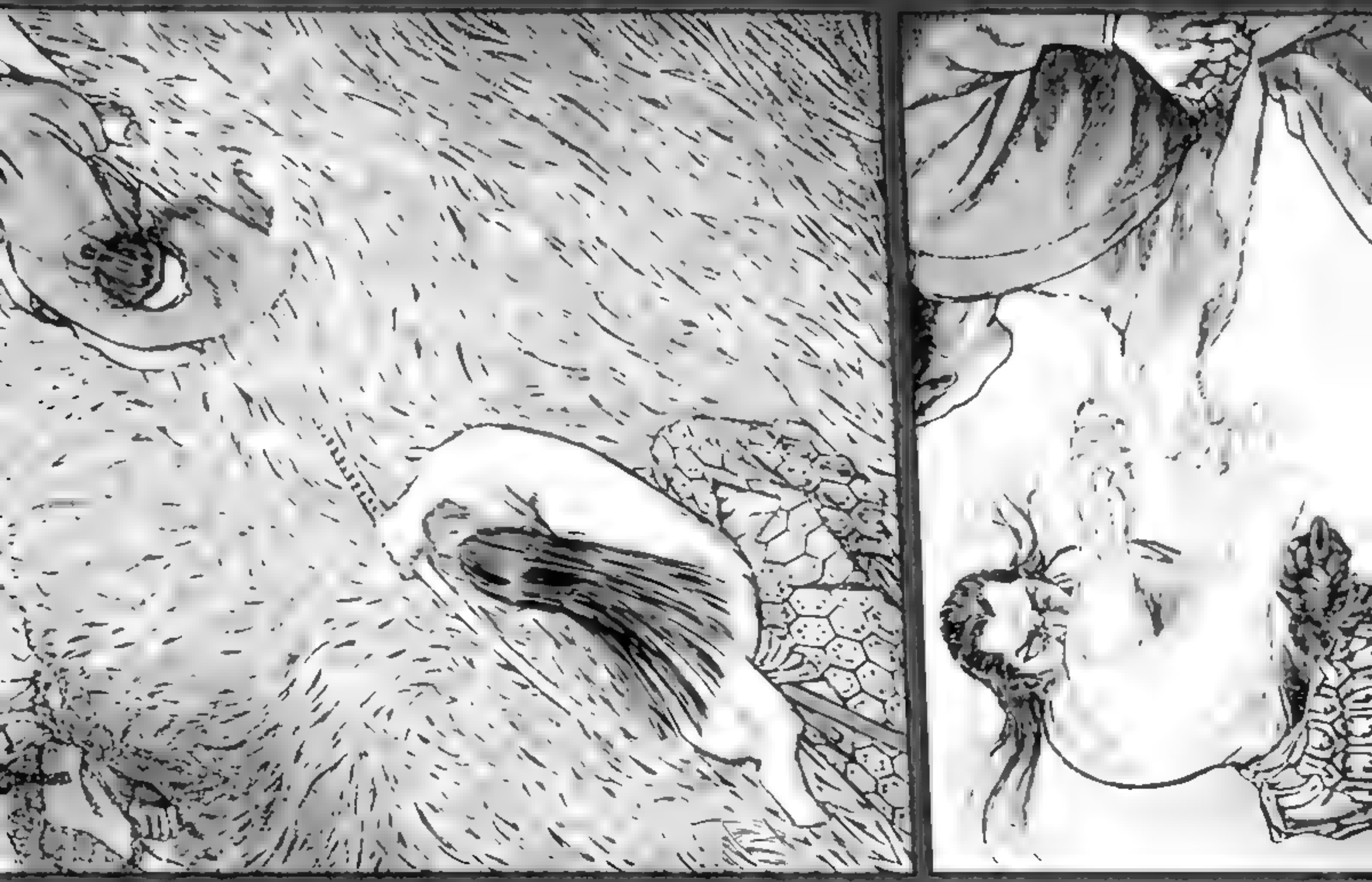
THAT MAN

CAN DO IT ...

GRASPED A SWORD THAT DID NOT EXIST.

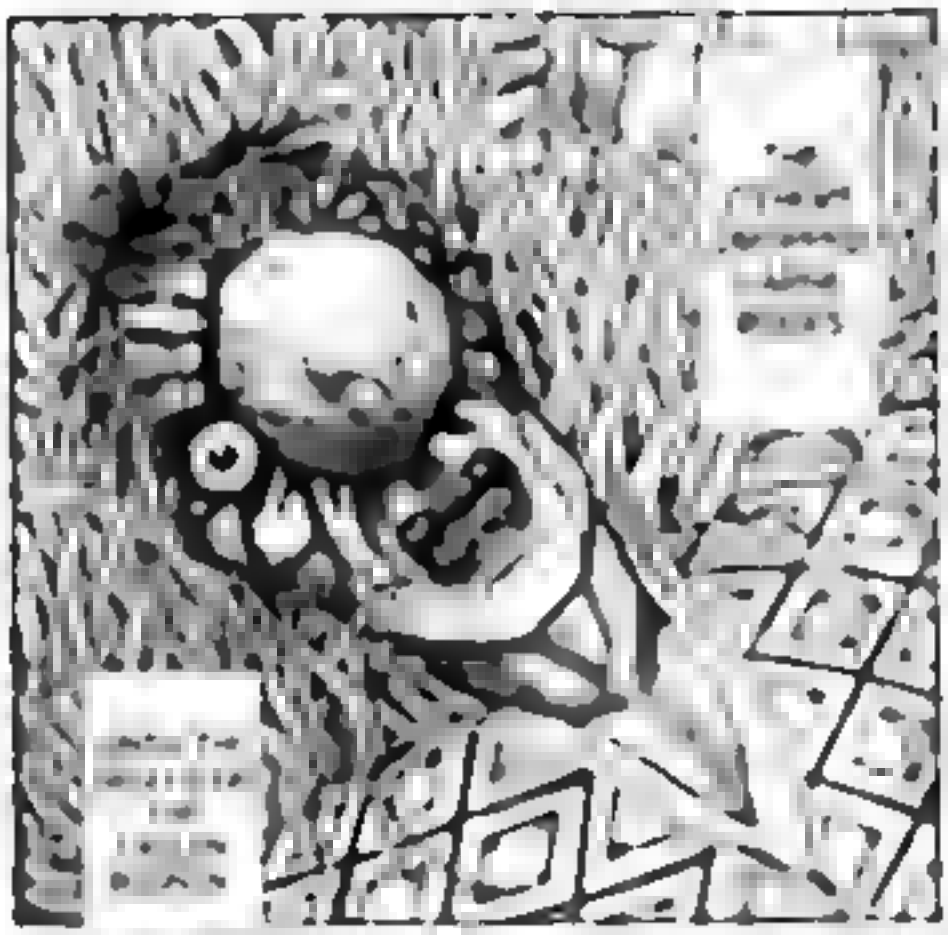
...AH!

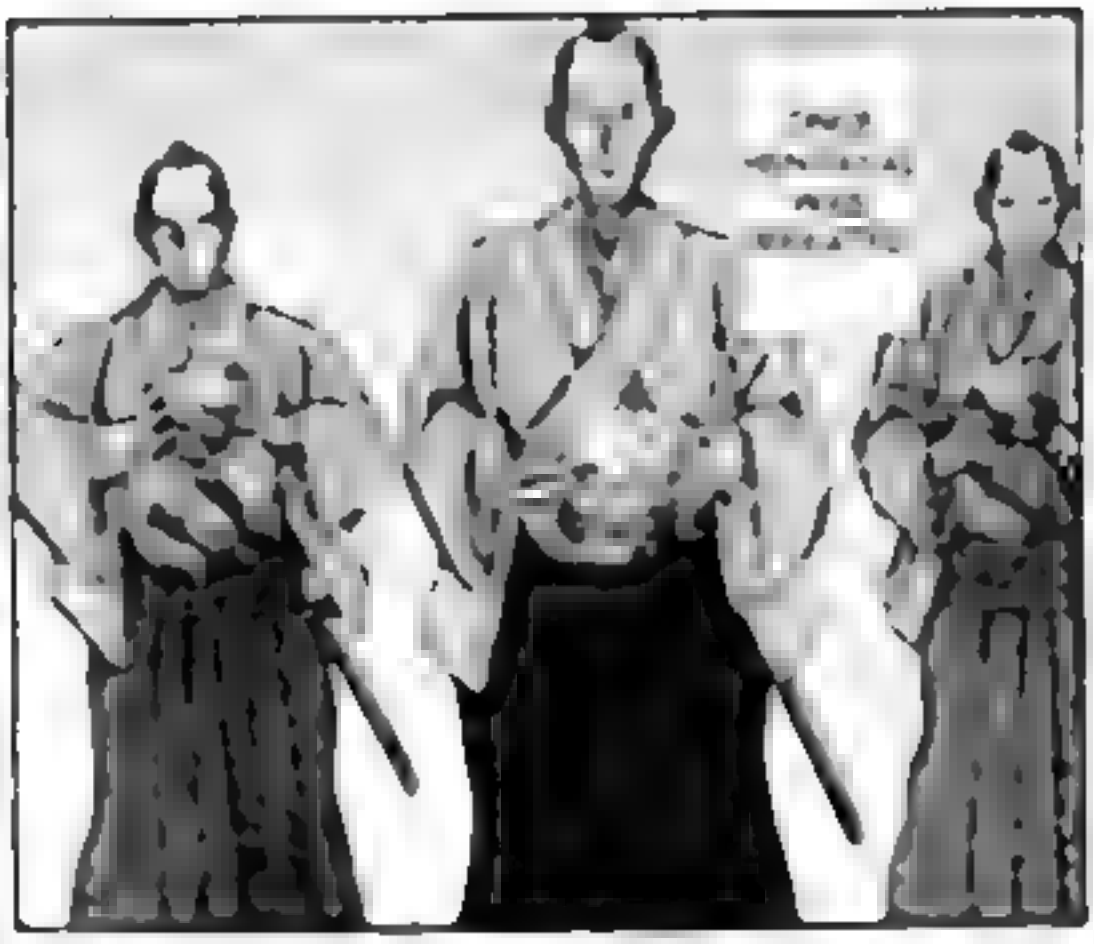
WATCH, CLOSELY



FISTS

FUJIKI





LEAVE
ONE

THE TEARS CAME UN-BIDDEN, !

FOR SUZUNOSUKE HAD CONFIRMED WITH HIS OWN TWO EYES THAT THE ART HE WAS LEARNING, KOGAN-RYUU, WAS TRULY THE MIGHTIEST IN THE LAND

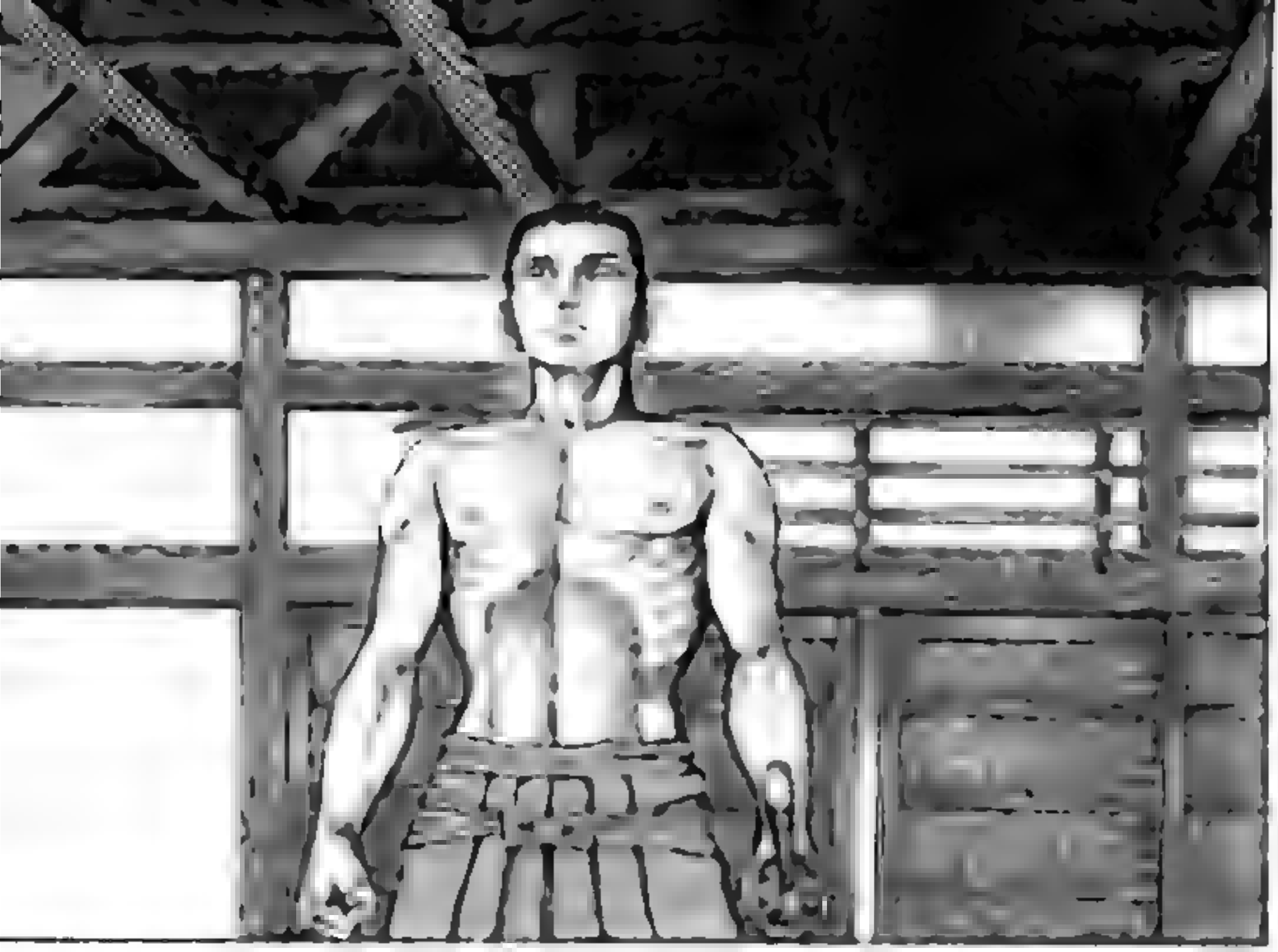
WAS SHINING BRIGHTLY IN FRONT OF HIM.

FOR THE VERY IMAGE OF THE SAMURAI HE WISHED ONE DAY TO BECOME,

SOMEDAY, I, TOO...

THE NEXT DAY

ON THAT DAY, HE FELT THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER



Champion
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「駿河城御前試合」
漫画 山口貴由

4

しぐるい

shigurui

RED
shgurui
4

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この作品はフィクションであり
実在の個人、団体等とは、いっさい関係ありません

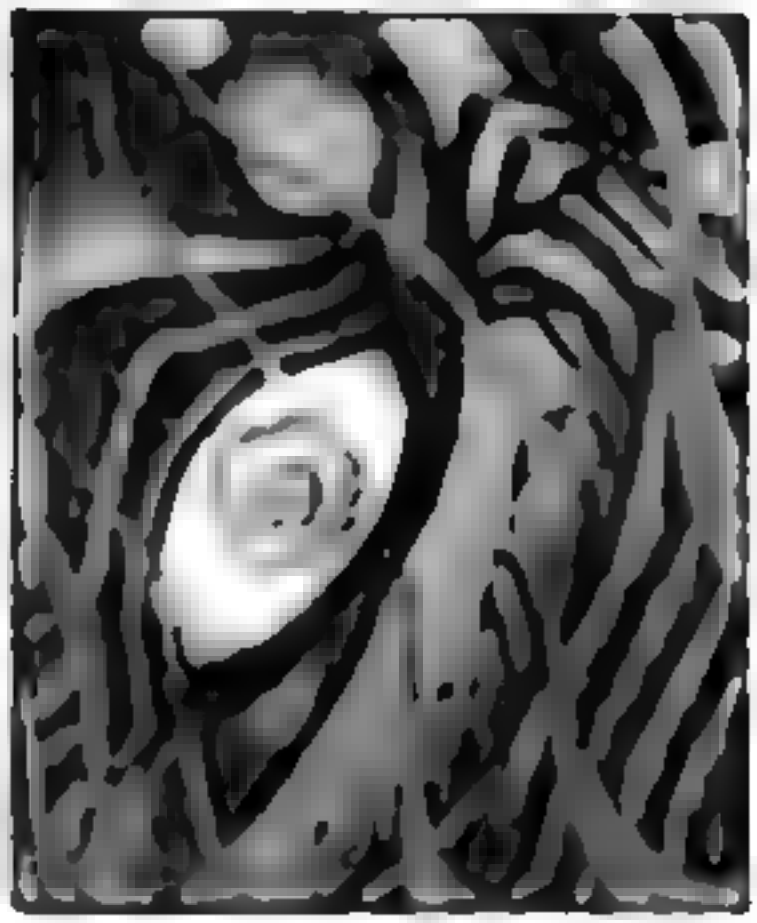
CHAPTER 17

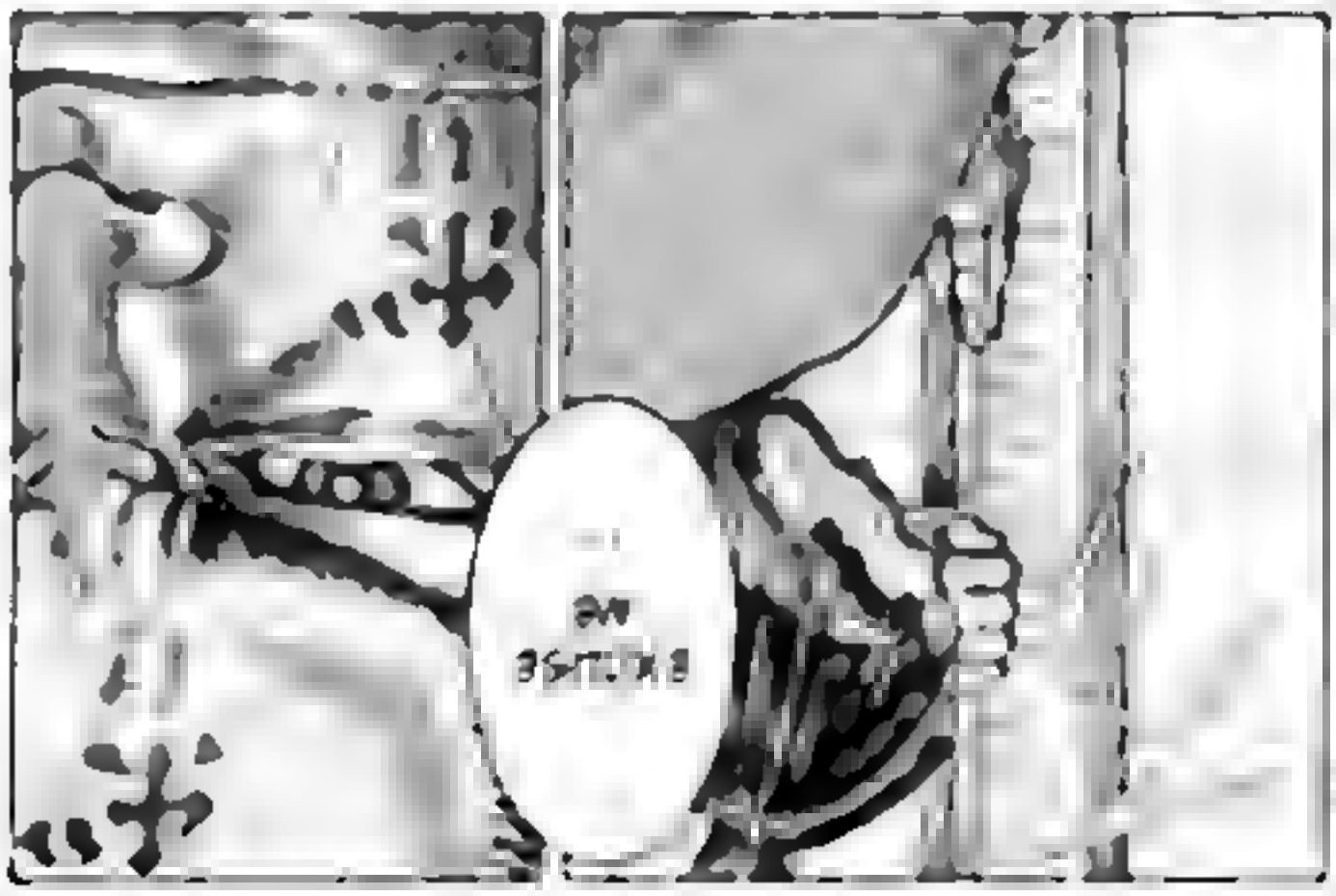
FACE

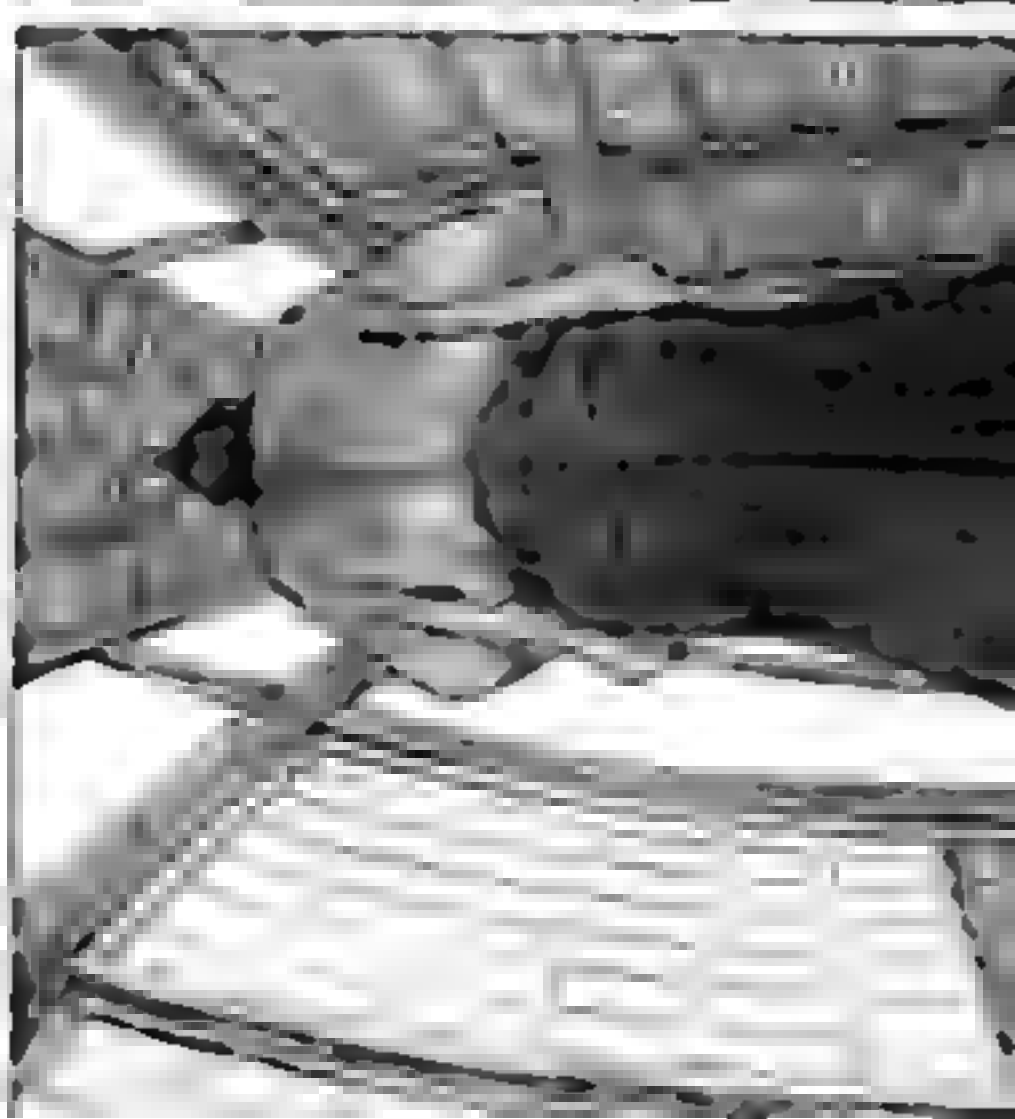
WHEN A CORPSE WAS DISCOVERED IN THE ESTATE OF KOGAN-RYUU,

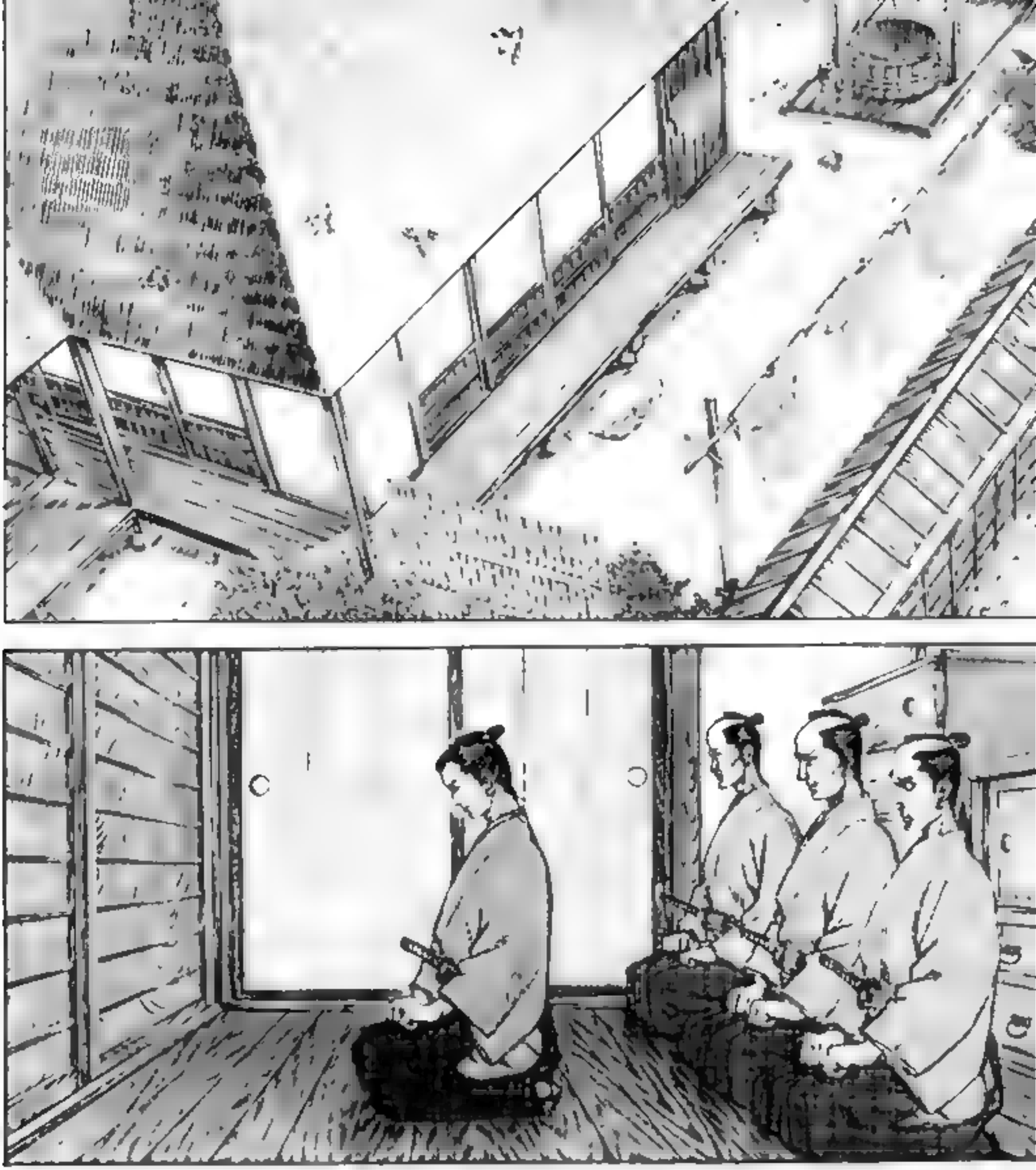
THE FIRST SUSPECT WAS NOT AN OUTSIDER

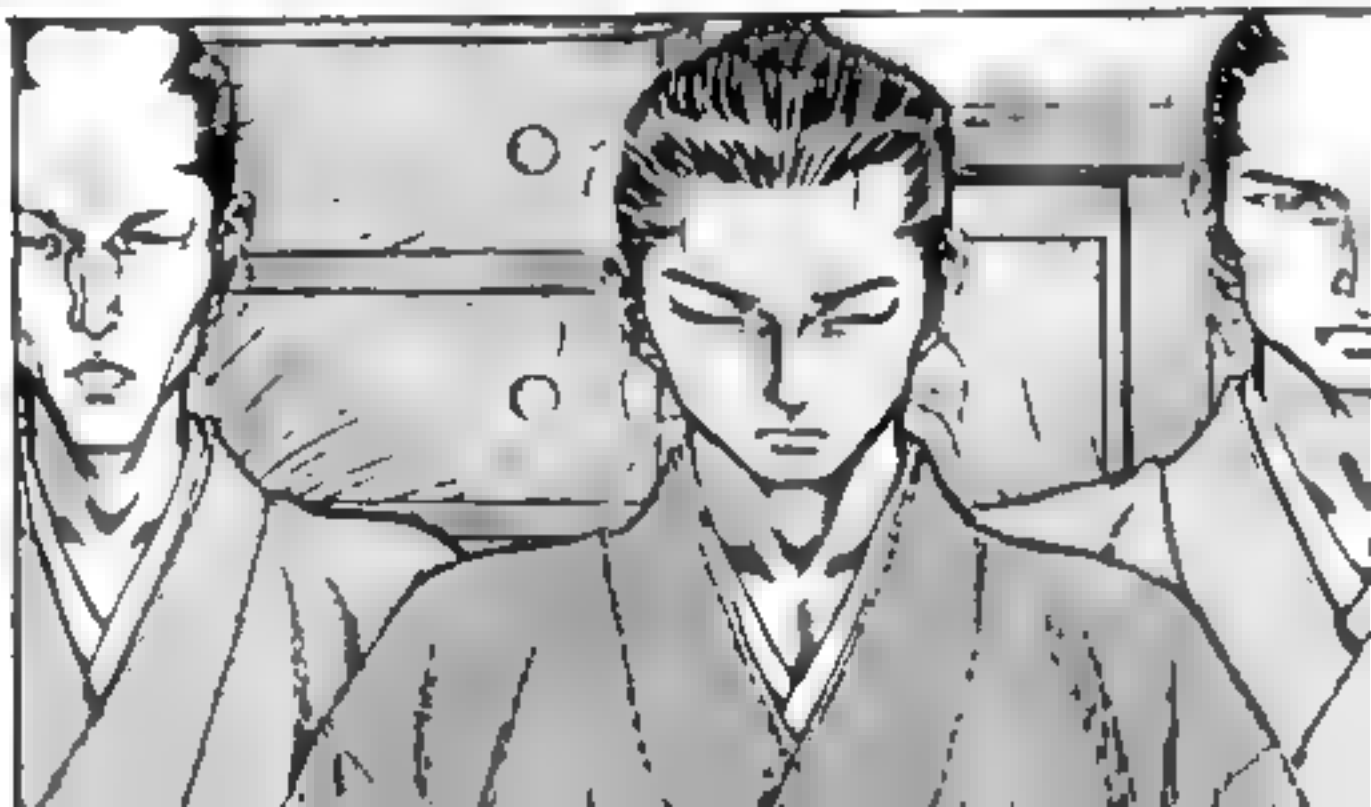
SENSEI
...











SHIHAN!

KOBAN-SENSEI IS NOT THE ONE WHO KILLED SUZUKI.

REPORT THIS HAPPENING TO THE AUTHORITIES

THE BODY WAS IN A

HIS CLOTHES ARENT STAINED BY BLOOD ...

THAT MEANS HE WAS BEHEADED AFTER HIS PULSE HAD STOPPED ...

WAS THE SLASH THAT SPLIT HIS FACE IN TWO

SO THE STRIKE THAT TOOK SUZU'S LIFE

USHIMATA-DONO, DO YOU HAVE ANY SUSPECTS?

YESTERDAY, SUZUNOSUKE PUNISHED A STRAY ROUNIN.

A ROUNIN ...

THE OFFICIAL'S REPLY WAS TINGED WITH RESIG-NATION

AFTER THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA, THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE BROUGHT RUIN TO MANY DAIMYOU, LEADING TO THE SUDDEN CREATION OF OVER-TWENTY-TWO THOUSAND ROUNIN.

STARTING IN THE FIRST YEAR OF KAN'EI, THEIR ACTS OF DEPRAVITY BEGAN ON A NATION-WIDE SCALE, QUICKLY GROWING BEYOND THE ABILITY OF THE OFFICIALS TO CONTAIN.

AT SUZUNO-SUKE'S FUNERAL,

KOGAN FOLLOWED BEHIND THE PROCESSION, HIS MIND CLOUDY AND CONFUSED.

THE FACE OF HIS FATHER, SOZAEMON, WAS AS THAT OF A WRAITH.

WHY WERE YOU CRYING ON THAT DAY ...

SUZUNOSUKE...

虎眼流指南

THE REPUTATION OF "MUSOU KOGAN-RYUU HAS BEEN STAINED.

ONCE HONOR HAS BEEN LOST, IT CANNOT BE REGAINED.

IT'S TOO LATE!

SOON WE SHALL FIND OURSELVES AS LAUGHING-STOCKS.

IF WE DO NOT ACT QUICKLY TO PUNISH THE CULPRIT,

WE HAVE TO MAKE A CULPRIT OURSELVES.

TAKE CARE OF ANY WHO HAVE DISPLAYED ANIMOSITY TOWARDS KOGAN-RYUU.

OTHER-WISE, OUR PRIDE WILL BE WORTH NOTHING.

THAT IS NOT TO SAY, KILL INDISCRIM-INATELY.

THE CULPRIT MUST BE SOMEONE OF SUFFICIENT SKILL.

HE WILL SUFFICE.

SUPPOSE IT WERE TO BE, *ITTOURYUU, HIGAKI JINGOROU...

*SINGLE SWORD STYLE

*ASSISTANT SUBSTITUTE MASTER

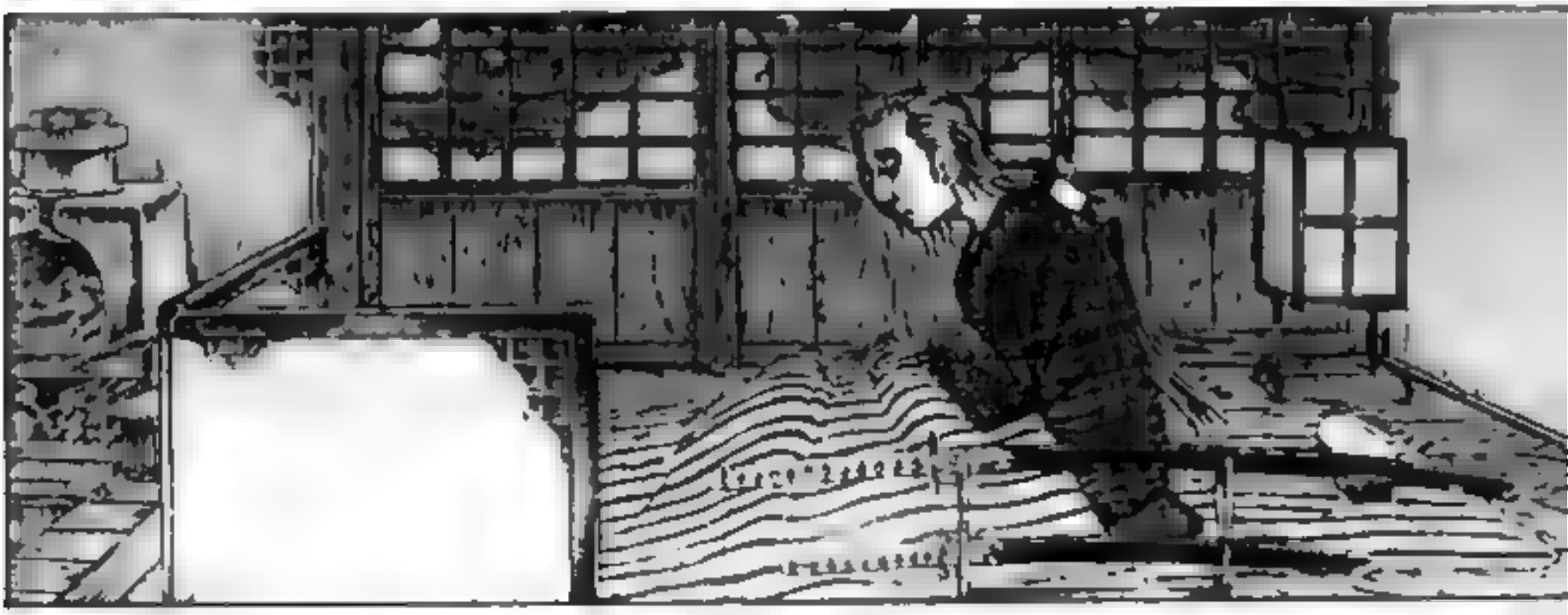
KOGAN-RYUU *SHIHANDAI, MUNAKATA SHINPACHIROU.

FORMER VIGILANTE OF KAKEGAWA.

THE TWENTY TWO DEEP SCARS ON HIS IRON BODY SERVED AS PROUD EVIDENCE THAT HE WAS A WARRIOR OF THE SENGOKU ERA.

MT. AWAGA

HIS HANDS POSSESSED STRENGTH SUFFICIENT TO CATCH A THROWN KNIFE IN MIDAIR.



I-NI-TOURYUU,
HIGAKI-JINGOROU.

THOUGH HE HAD
BEEN DEFEATED
IN THE PAST
BY USHIMATA
GONZAEMON

HE HAD NOT
FLED, INSTEAD
RETREATING INTO
THE MOUNTAINS
AND TRAINING
HIMSELF FURTHER
IN THE WAYS
OF THE SWORD

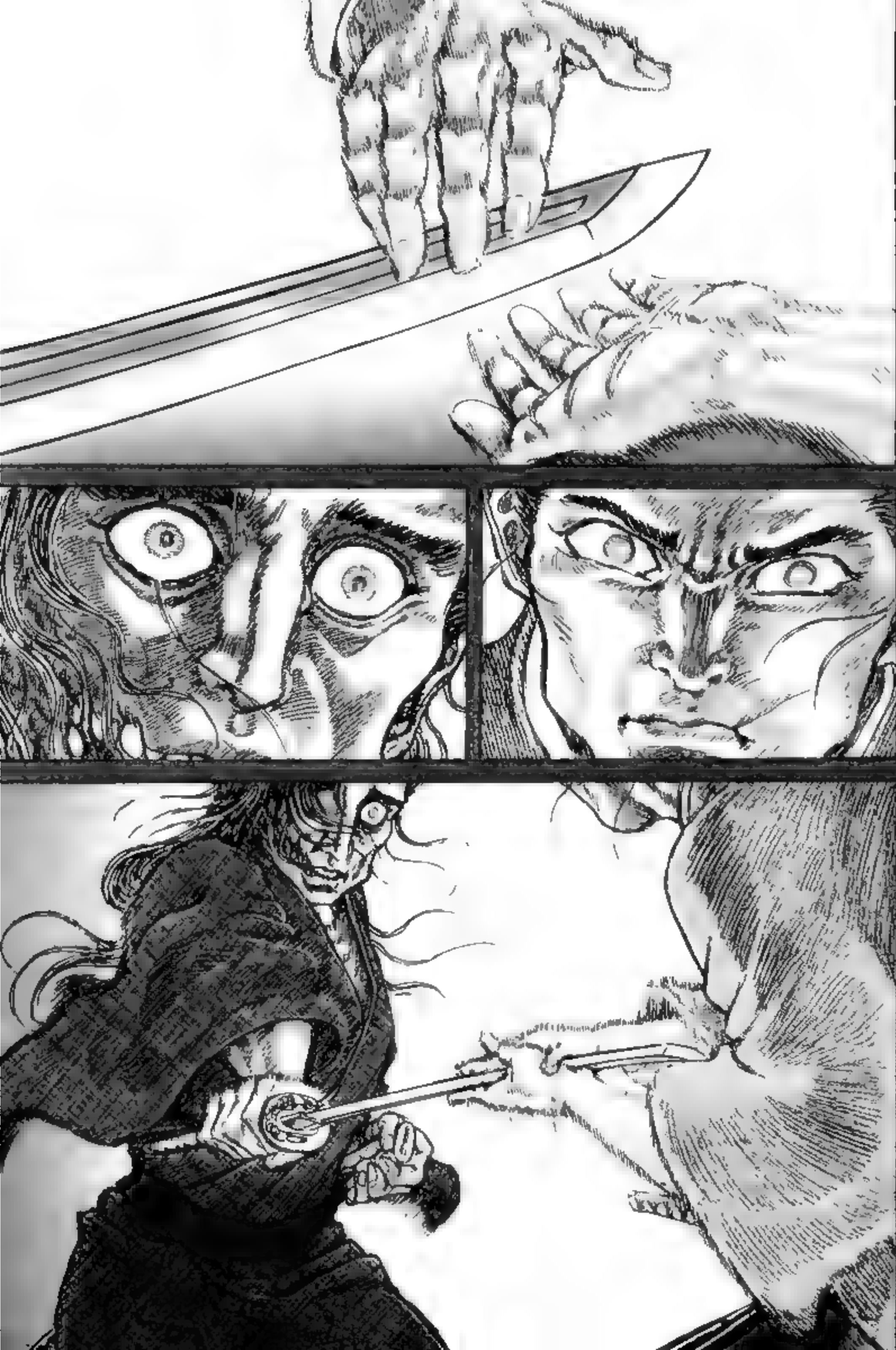
I AM MUNAKATA SHINPACHIROU OF KOGAN-RYUU!!

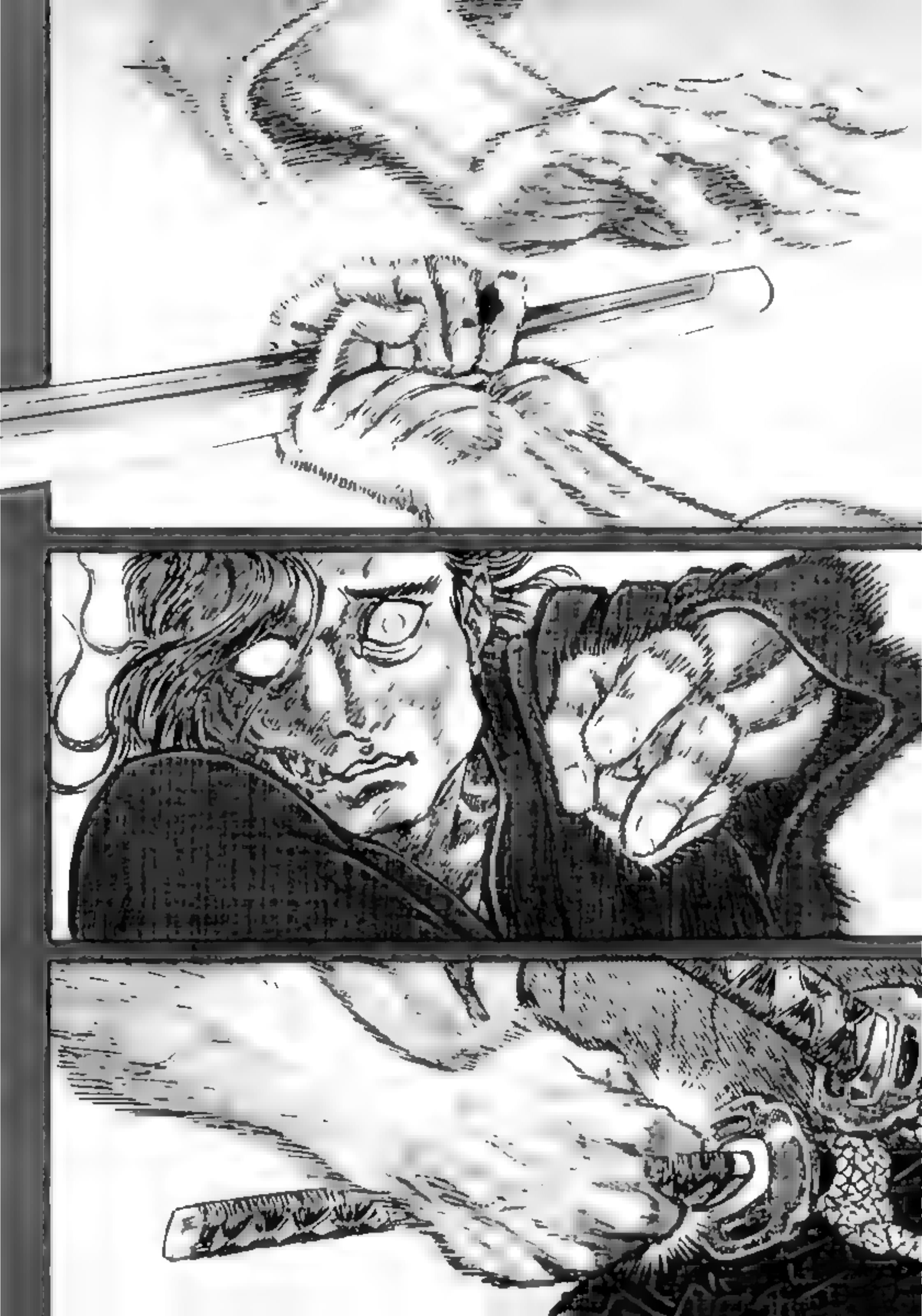
WHO GOES THERE!

A DUEL, IF YOU WILL.

I THOUGHT IT WAS ABOUT TIME YOU CAME ALONG

WELCOME





YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT KAKEGAWA WHILE YOU HAD THE CHANCE.

AT THIS MOMENT, I HAVE PUNISHED THE ONE WHO KILLED KONDOU SUZUNOSUKE!

BY THE TIME SHIN-PACHIROU REACHED THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE.

THE SUN HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO RISE

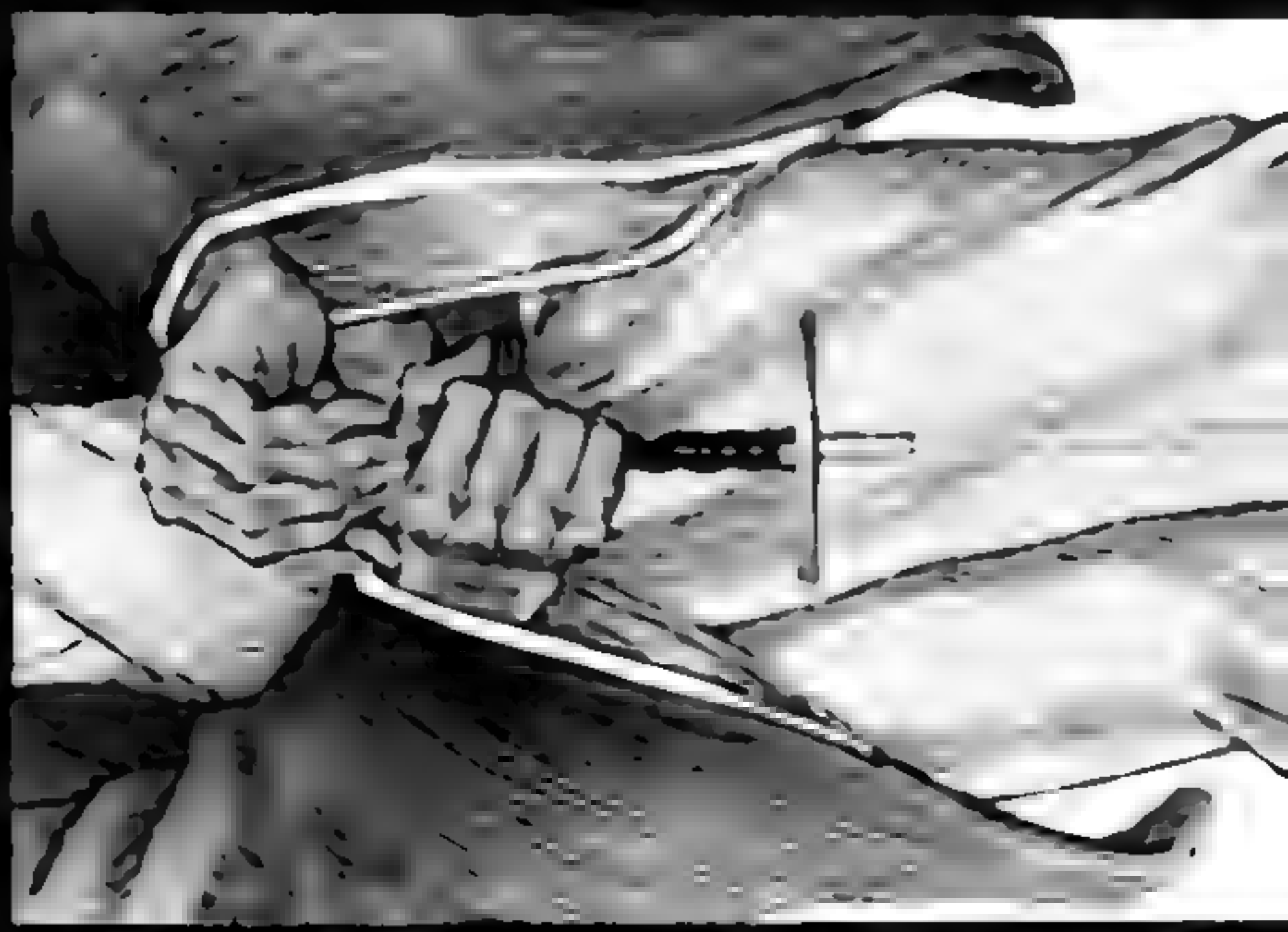
HE BEHELD A PECULIAR SIGHT IN THE MISTS.

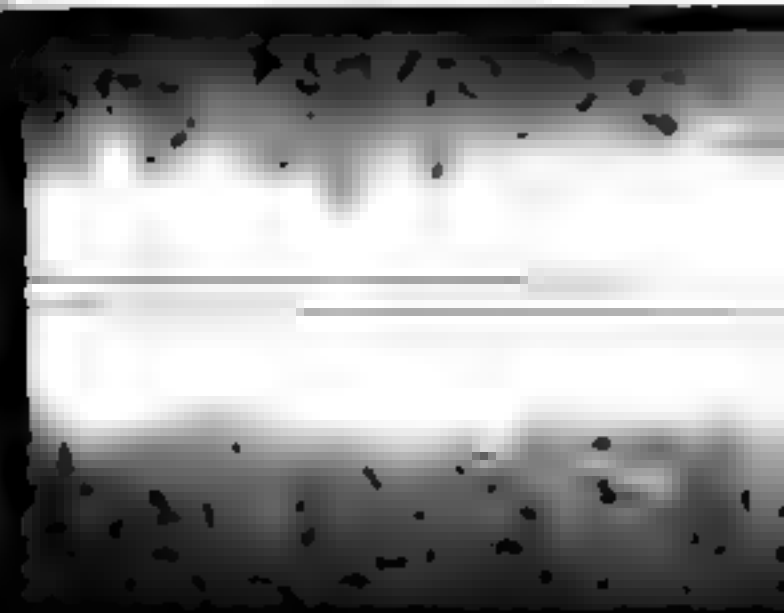
THOUGH HIS FEATURES COULD NOT BE CLEARLY SEEN

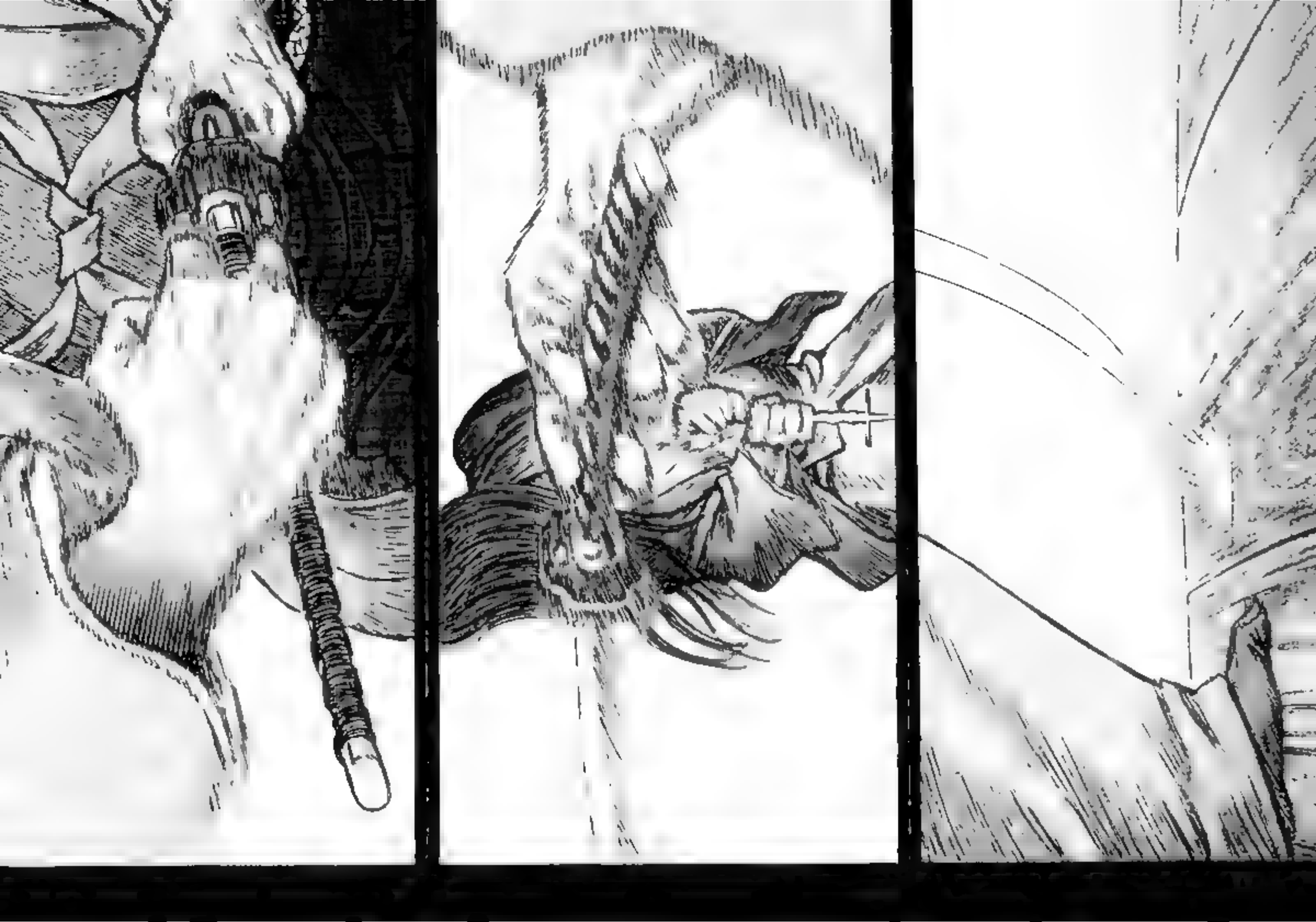
IT LOOKED AS THOUGH HE MIGHT BE SMILING

A SIMPLETON, THEN?

A LONE MAN STOOD STILL IN THE CENTER OF THE BRIDGE, CLUTCHING HIS CANE

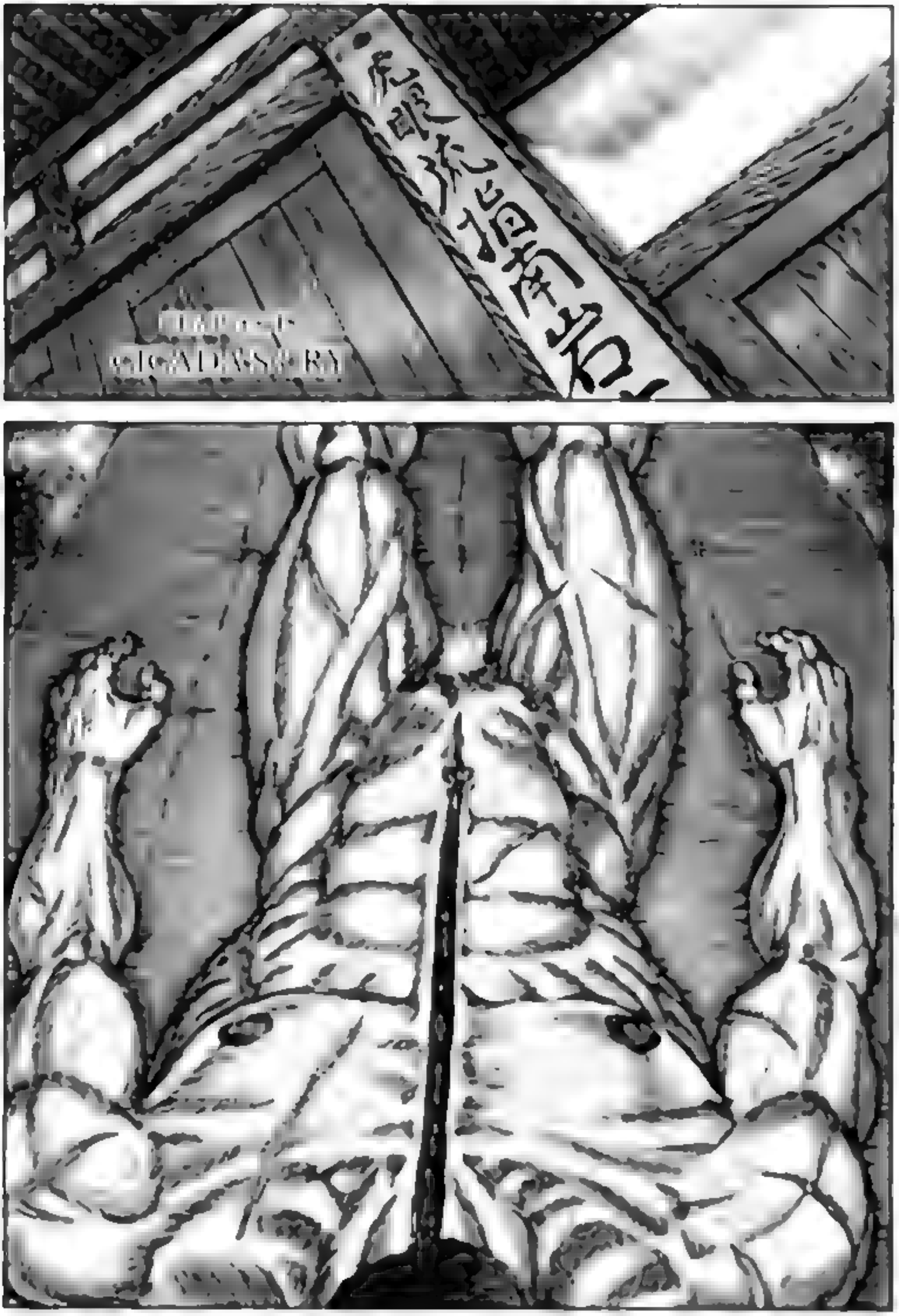






SHINPACHIROU'S DECAPITATED HEAD WAS DISCOVERED

BITING DOWN ON A BAMBOO SWORD



THE DISCIPLES OF KOGAN-RYUU | ...DE NO

IS ALSO THE ONE WHO MURDERED SHIN-PACHIROU

THE ONE WHO KILLED SUZU.

THE SWORD STRUCK FROM BELOW SLICING UPWARDS

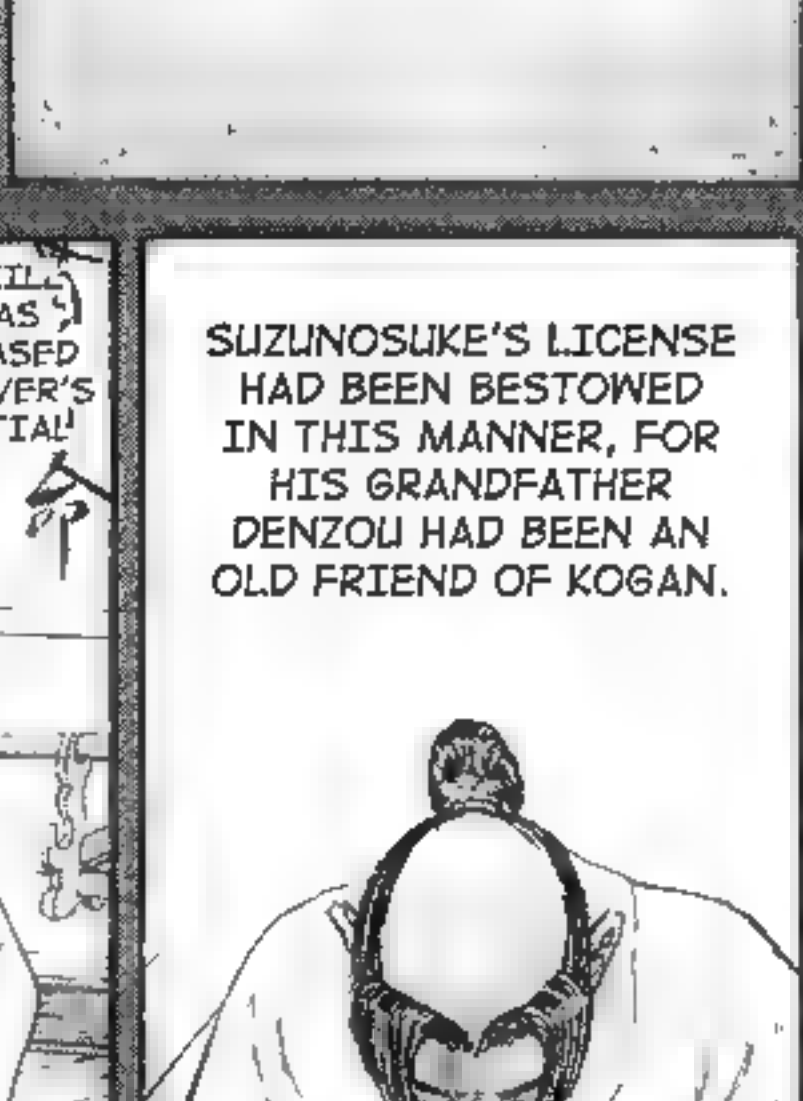
THERE EXISTED THE MONETARY LICENSE, THE LOYALTY LICENSE, AND THE SKILL LICENSE

IN THE PASSING ON OF A MARTIAL ART,

SHINPACHIROU HAD A SKILL LICENSE.

A LOYALTY LICENSE WAS GIVEN BY THE SCHOOL'S GRANDMASTER TO HIS LORD, OR TO THOSE CLOSE TO HIM. AGAIN, REGARDLESS OF SKILL.

THE MONETARY LICENSE INVOLVED BESTOWING A LICENSE ON ANYONE WHO PAID THE PROPER AMOUNT OF GOLD, REGARDLESS OF SKILL.



ONLY THE SKILL LICENSE WAS BESTOWED BASED ON THE RECEIVER'S ACTUAL MARTIAL PROWESS

SUZUNOSUKE'S LICENSE HAD BEEN BESTOWED IN THIS MANNER, FOR HIS GRANDFATHER DENZOU HAD BEEN AN OLD FRIEND OF KOGAN.

MUNAKATA SHINPACHIROU HAD HELD SUCH A LICENSE

THE ENEMY IS A MAN OF CONSIDERABLE SKILL.

EVERYONE MUST STAY ALERT.

KAKEGAWA.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE HAD BEEN BEHEADED

HOW WOULD THE REPU-TATION OF KOGAN-RYUU FARE?

A BAMBOO SWORD?

THEY SAY THE BEHEADED ONE, SHINPACHIROU, WAS FOUND BITING DOWN ON ONE.

AYE, A BAMBOO SWORD.

IT'S OBVIOUS

WHY WOULD THE MURDERER LEAVE HIM WITH A BAMBOO SWORD?

KOGAN-RYUU IS AS DULL AND BLUNT AS A BAM-

IT MEANS THAT TO HIM.

YAMAZAKI KUROUEMON

I WOULD NEVER SAY SUCH A-

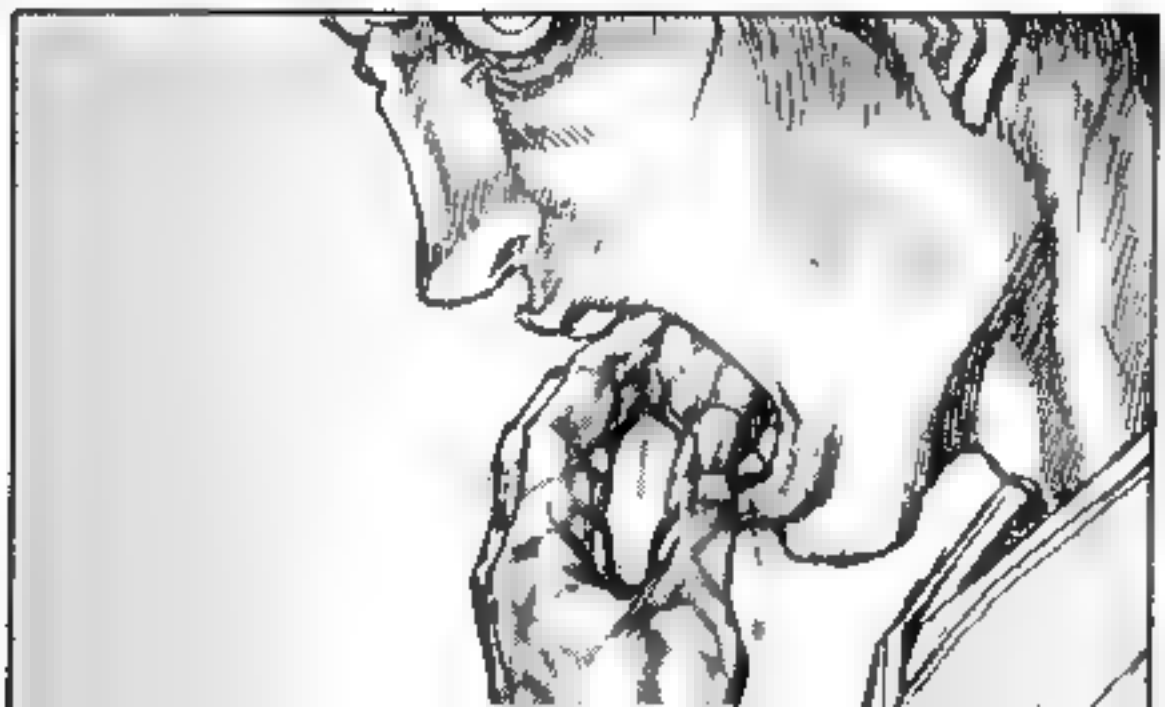
I, I ...

DULL AND BLUNT, YOU SAY.

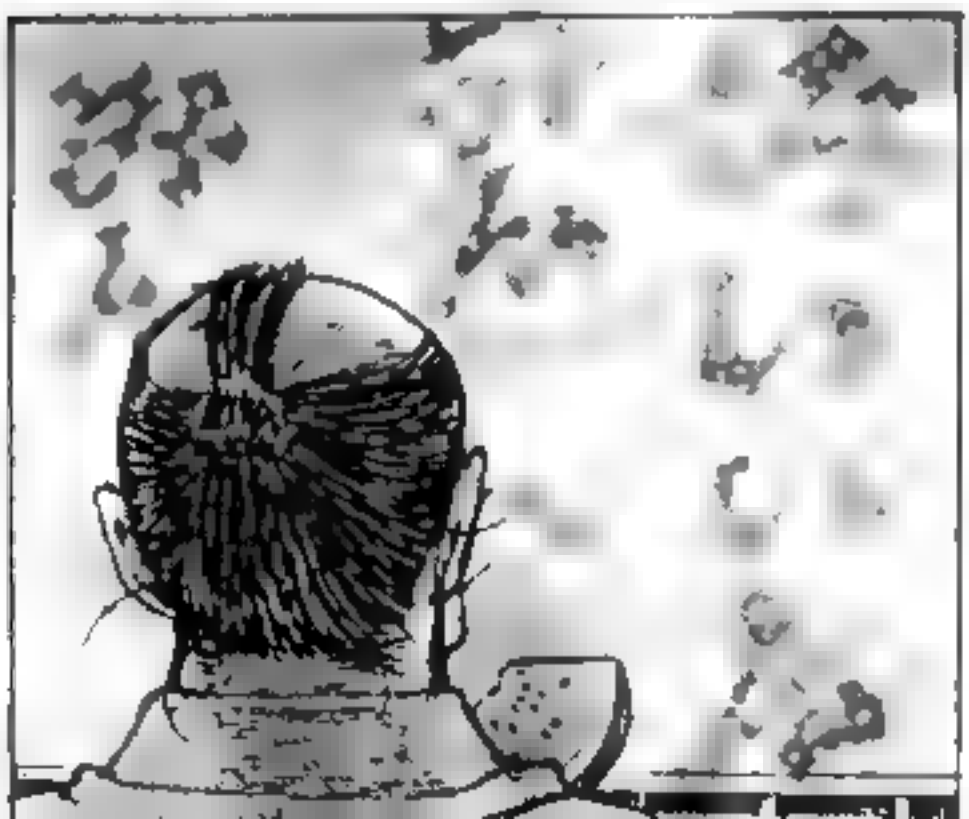
ARE YOU A DISCIPLE OF KOGAN-RYUU-?

SUCH AN ATTACK, USING THE WRIST WAS KNOWN AS THE TIGER'S FIST

THE MOUTH IS THE SOURCE OF DISASTER



TO SNEER AT KOGAN-RYUU WAS IMPOSSIBLE



WHERE DID IRAKO SEIGEN HAIL FROM, AGAIN?

MARIKO ...

WHY HIM...?

IRAKO?

I SEE ...

MMM.

HA.

THE CICADAS WERE CRYING LOUDLY LIKE THIS ON THE DAY HE APPEARED AT OUR DOUJOU.

WHO WAS DISOWNED BECAUSE HE ONLY FOCUSED ON THE BLADE...

IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, IRAKO SEIGEN WAS THE SON OF A RICH EDO DYE MERCHANT,

HMM. EDO.

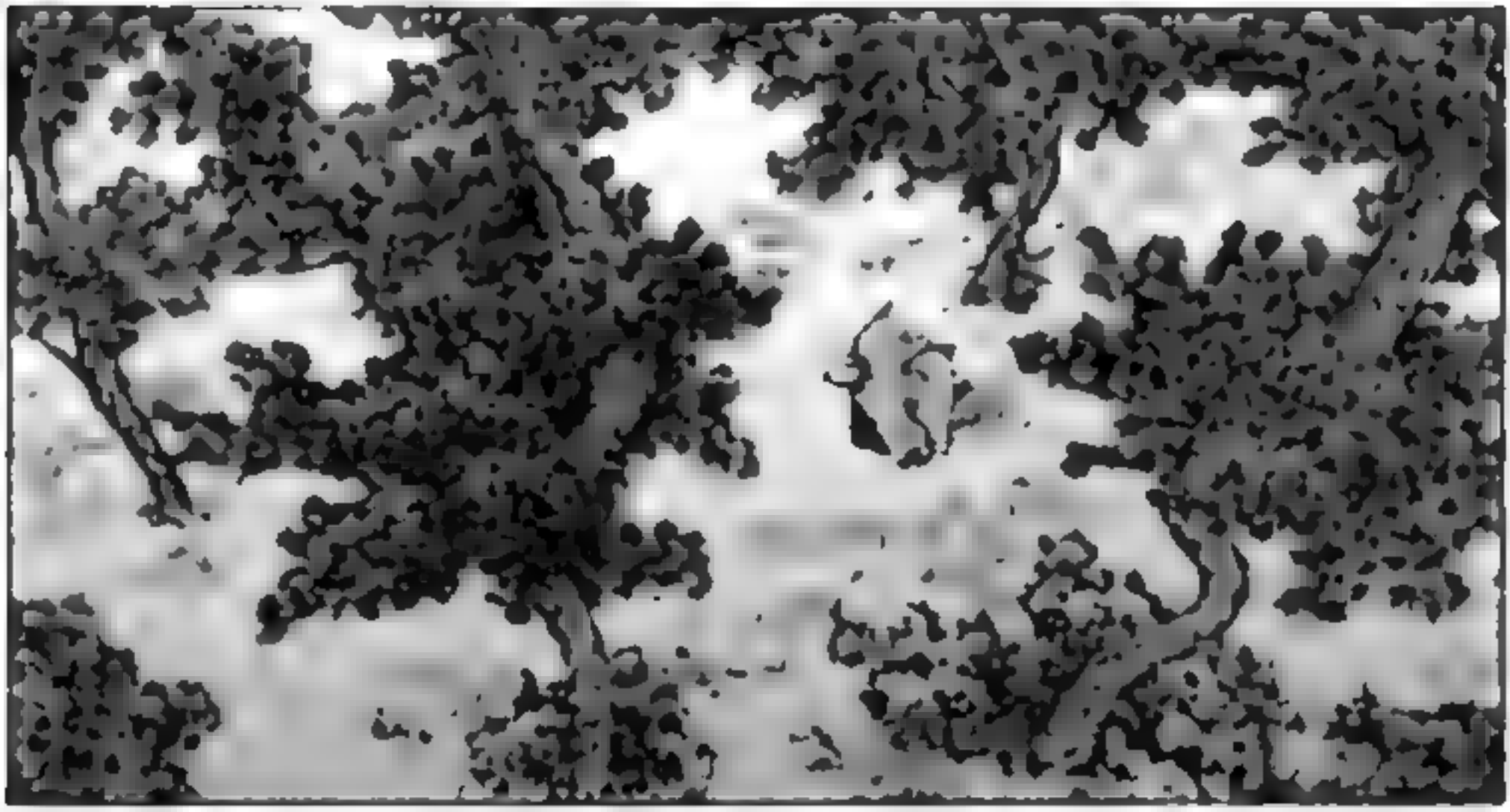
I HOPE YOU RECOVER FULLY.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

AH, MIE-DONO.

DEATH

ESTATE AFTER DARK



SUZUNOSUKE...

THOUGH IT WAS KNOWN THAT KUROU-EMON.

THE WARRIORS OF KOGAN-RYUU WERE NOT SO COLD AS TO HOLD IT AGAINST HIM

WHO LIVED AT THE DOUJOU, SOMETIMES FELL INTO SUCH FANTASIES,

SO YOU'RE THE ONE...

EL BRU-
PAUNS
SWORD
CAME
"O A BIG"
BEHIND
HIS BACK

THIS WAS ONE
OF OGAN-
INVINCIBLE
STANCES

FAR SUR-
PASSED
THAT OF
"NAGARE."

BOTH
THE
SPEED
AND THE
TIMING
OF THE
BLOW

CHAPTER 19

BLIND MAN

WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?

...MAY BE IRAKO SEIGEN.

I BELIEVE THAT THE CULPRIT ...

THREE YEARS AGO, MUNAKATA SHINPACHIROU HANDED HIM A BAMBOO SWORD BEFORE HIS PUNISHMENT.

SHINPACHIROU WAS FOUND BITING DOWN ON A BAMBOO SWORD AS WELL.

ALSO, YAMAZAKI KUROUEMON PRESENTED THE BURNING IRON TO THEM ON THAT DAY.

THE [illegible] SCARRED ONE SIDE OF KUROUEMON'S FACE.

THAT TRAILS
[illegible] HAD
PLED TO
ON THE
DAY HE
ARRIVED

FINALLY
SUZU'S
HEAD WAS
LAID AT
THE VERY
PLACE

SEIGEN
IS BLIND.

SUZUNOSUKE WAS YET IMMATURE!

IN THE PITCH BLACK OF NIGHT!

MUNAKATA AND YAMAZAKI FACED HIM.

I KNOW THAT.

A BLIND SWORDSMAN ...

LISTEN CLOSELY.

THOUGH THE RENOWNED SWORDSMAN OF THE SENGOKU ERA, TODA SEIGEN, HAD BEEN A MASTER OF CHUUJOU-RYUU

PORTRAITS OF THE MAN WERE DRAWN WITHOUT PUPILS.

SEIGEN, WITH A SWORD LESS THAN TWO FEET LONG,

RESEARCHED SWORD TECHNIQUES THAT WOULD ALLOW HIM TO SUBDUE OPPONENTS WIELDING BLADES OVER THREE FEET IN LENGTH

IT IS THOUGHT THAT IN THIS WAY, HIS DISCIPLE, SASAKI KOJIRO,

WAS NATURALLY ABLE TO TRAIN HIMSELF IN THE WAYS OF THE LONG BLADE.

MINONO

BELOW MT. INABA CASTLE

EIROKU FOURTH YEAR

JULY 23RD

ON THAT DAY,

"ODA SEIGAN WAS FACING OFF AGAINST ANOTHER SWORDSMAN ON HIS LORD'S YARD AS HIS LORD DEMANDED

WATCHING FROM THE SIDELINES, HIS YOUNGER BROTHER TODA KAGEMASA, AS WELL AS SASAKI KOJIROU, ALONG WITH SEIGEN'S MANY OTHER DISCIPLES, WAITED READY TO AVENGE THEIR MASTER SHOULD HE FALL.

CAUSING HIS EYES TO BECOME MILKY AND CLOUDED, AS THEY WERE IN HIS PORTRAITS. HE WAS BLIND.

AT THE TIME, TODA SEIGEN HAD ALREADY BEEN AFFLICTED WITH A DISEASE,

HIS OPPONENT, A MAN NAMED UMEZU, WAS A DISCIPLE OF SHINTOU -RYUU

IN HIS HANDS WAS A STAVE, THREE AND A HALF FEET LONG.

SEIGEN HELD A LOG BARELY OVER A FOOT IN LENGTH,

HIS SWORD HAND WRAPPED IN SUPPLE LEATHER.

UMEZU ...

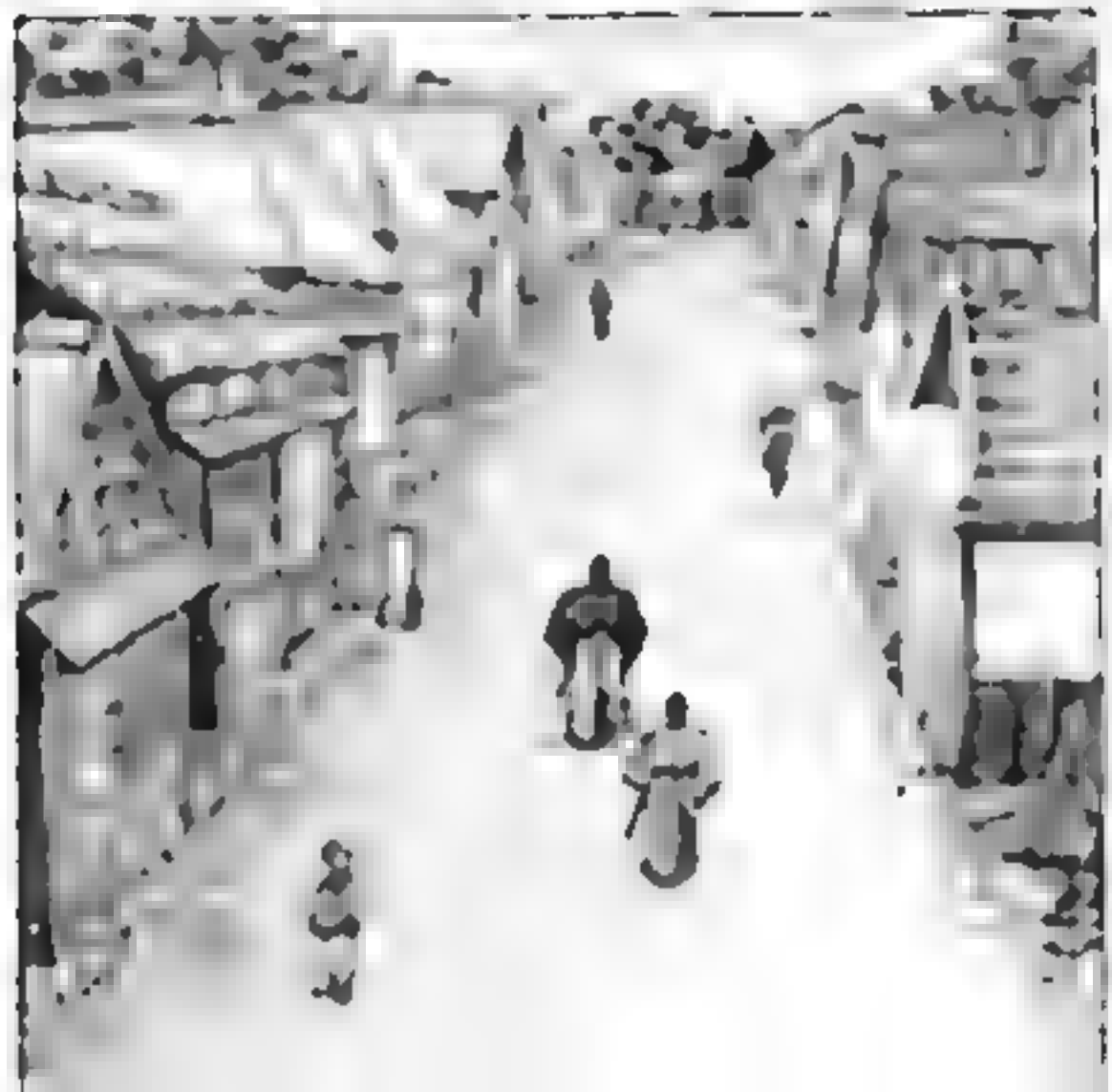
URGH ...!

I HAVE HEARD THAT HE BEAT HIS OPPONENT WILDLY AND INDISCRIM-INATELY.

THAT IS WHAT A BLIND SWORDS-MAN IS LIKE

THAT WAS HOW HE HAD TO FIGHT BECAUSE HE COULD NOT SEE

THE WARRIORS OF KOGAN-RYUU WERE ALL FELLED BY A SINGLE STRIKE.



I'M COMING

I TAKE IT IWAMOTO-SAMA IS LOOKING TO PURCHASE MY SERVICES?

WELCOME. WELCOME

THE BLIND MAN TSUDANOICHI WAS A MASSEUSE AND AN ACUPUNCTURIST

NO.

THEN,
MAY I
ASK WHY
YOU SAW
FIT TO
VISIT?

AH...

THEN YOU
ARE BOUND
TO HAVE
SOME WAY OF
CONTACTING
ONE ANOTHER

AS YOU
CAN SEE,

AN
UNFAMILIAR
BLIND MAN,
SIRS?

I AM
BLIND AND
THEREFORE
...

HAVE YOU
HEARD OF AN
UNFAMILIAR
BLIND MAN
AROUND
THESE PARTS
LATELY?

THE TOUDOUZA WAS AN ORGANIZATION COMPOSED OF, AND GOVERNED COMPLETELY, BY THE BLIND, ENCOMPASSING ALL MEN IN THE LAND WHO WERE WITHOUT SIGHT. ITS SCALE WAS FAR LARGER THAN THE AVERAGE MAN COULD IMAGINE.

YOU SPEAK OF THE TOUDOUZA.

ARE YOU TRULY UNAWARE OF THE BLIND MAN WE'RE LOOKING FOR?

IF YOU MUST KNOW ...

I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BEST TO ASK KENGYOU-SAMA ...

KE
..
POSSESSOR OF LANDS ON PAR WITH ANY NOBLE- A MAN WITH NO LESS THAN THIRTEEN PERSONAL MANSERVANTS HE ENJOYED A LIFE OF INCREDIBLE LUXURY
THE TOUDOUIA WAS COMPOSED OF FOUR DIVISIONS, FOURTEEN SUB-DIVISIONS, AND SEVENTY-THREE SUBSECTIONS. AT THE SUMMIT OF THAT WAS THE MAN KNOWN AS KENGYOU

FOR THE DISCIPLE OF A MERE MARTIAL ARTS MASTER TO THINK OF EVEN REQUESTING TO MEET HIM PERSONALLY WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.

YOU KNOW THAT WE COULD NEVER EVEN TRY TO MEET HIM, AND YET YOU DARE SUGGEST IT SO CASUALLY ...

TSUBAKICHI

WHAT?

A STRANGE AND HORRIBLY UNNATURAL SOUND THAT TSUDANOICHI HAD NEVER HEARD BEFORE DRILLED INTO HIS EARS

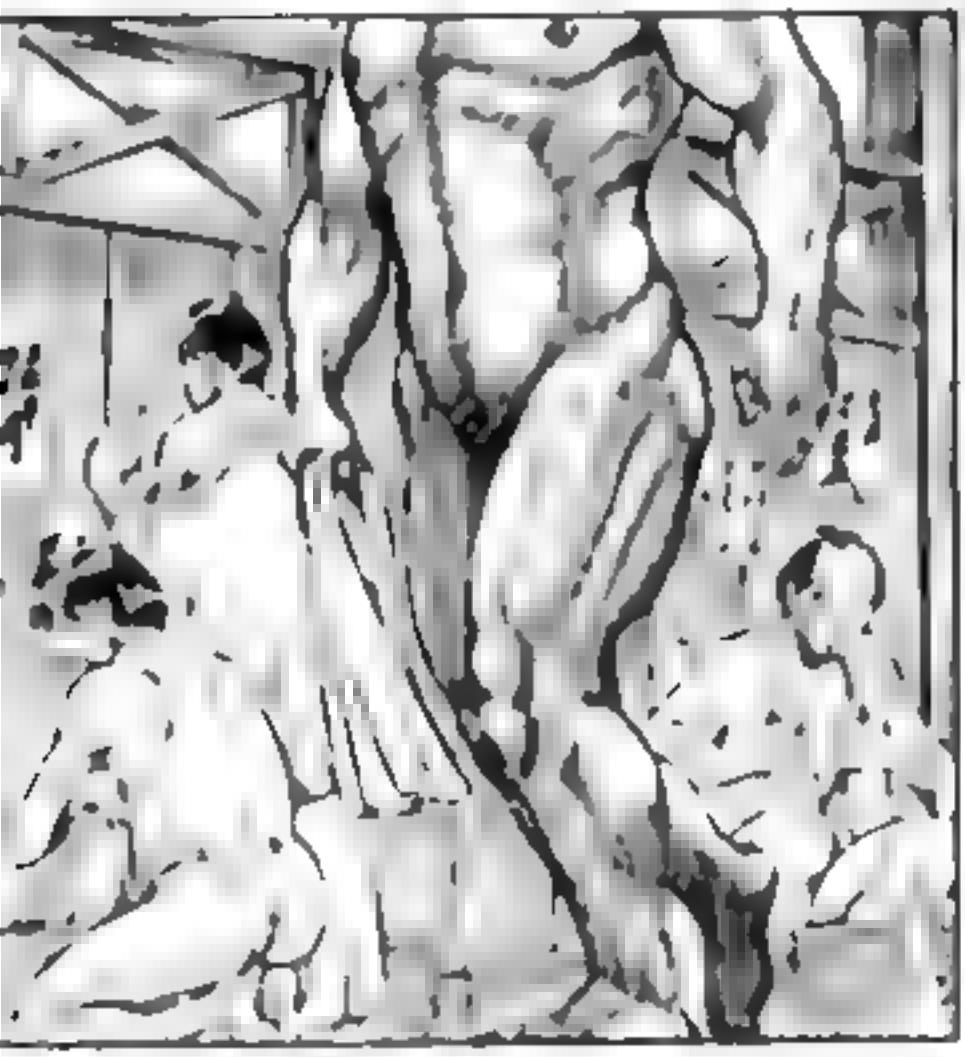
FROM THE CEILING WHERE ORITSU SANJURO WAS SUSPENDED

1 THERE ALSO CAME A FOREIGN SHRIEK THE LIKES OF WHICH TSUDANOICHI HAD NEVER EVEN IMAGINED

GRIPPED BY TERROR OF THE UNKNOWN,

HE UNCONSCIOUSLY VOIDED HIS BLADDER.

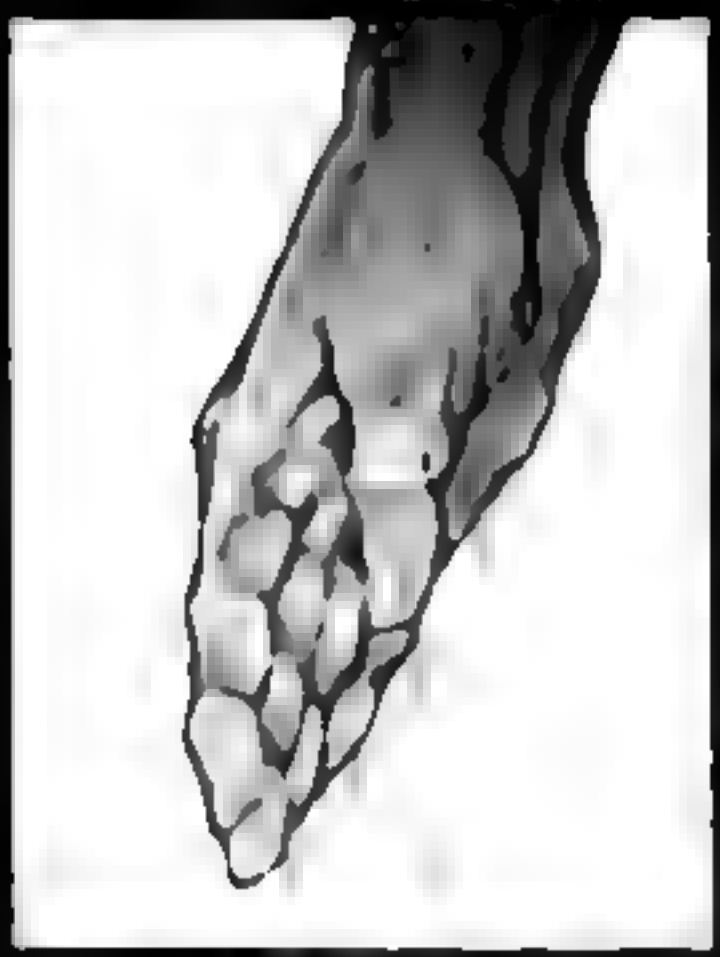
FRONT OF THE PUBLIC BATHS

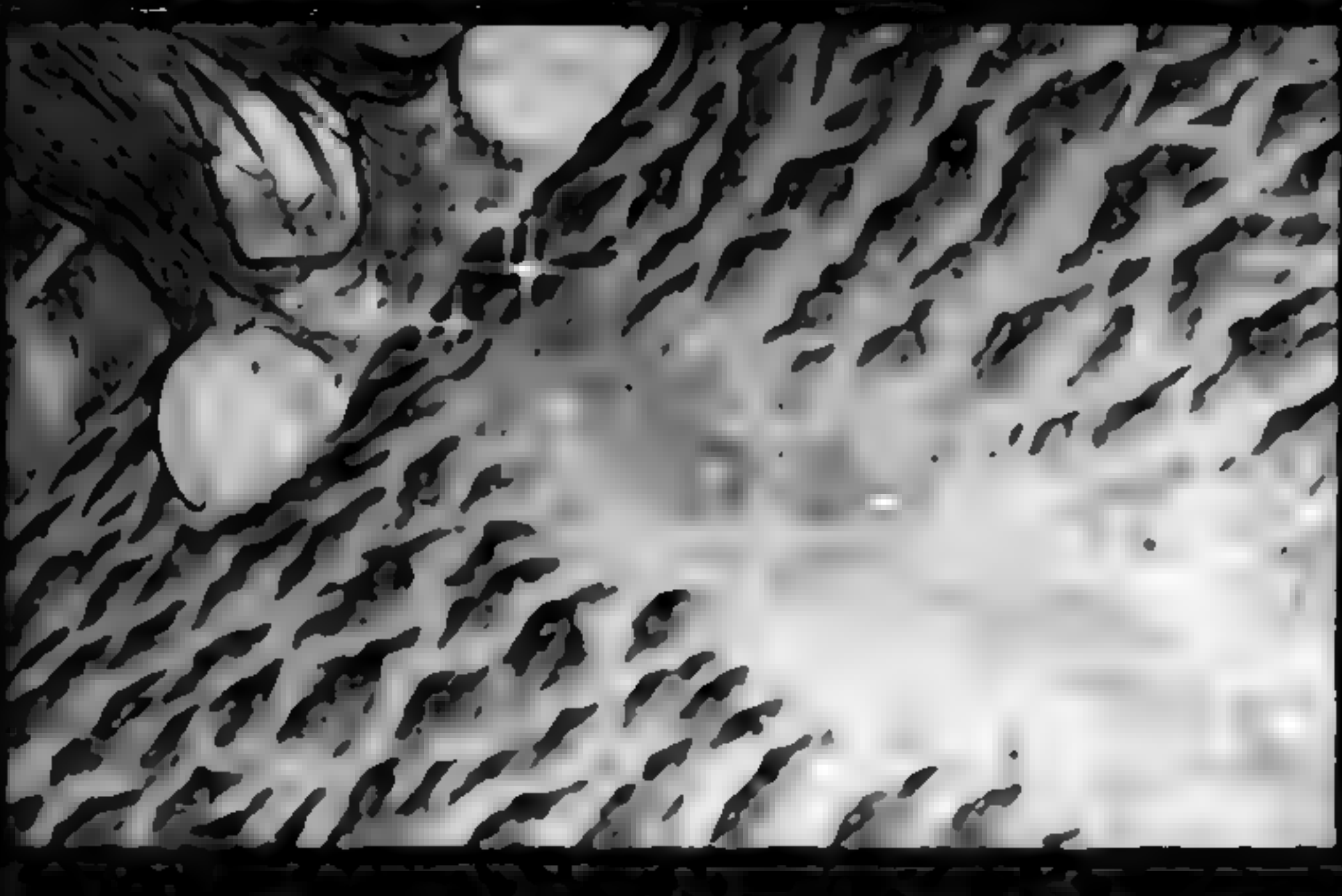


THOUGH,
OF A MAN
TARGETED
FOR ASSASS-
INATION.

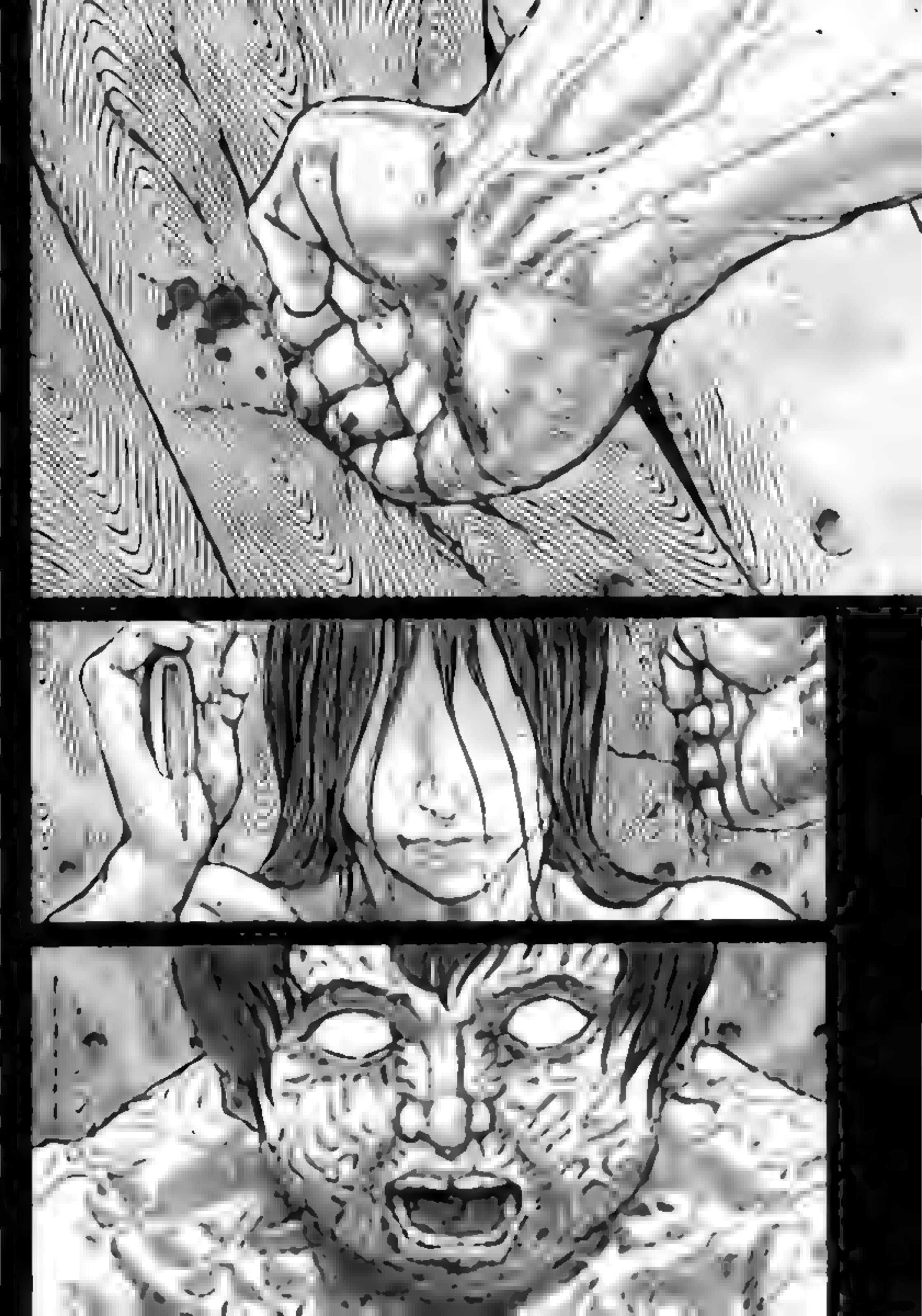
WAS A
DEADLY
WEAPON
IN AND OF
ITSELF
THE BODY
OF MARIA
HIKOBEE,
SECOND ONLY
TO USHIMATA
GONZAEMON
IN RAW
STRENGTH

ALSO IT COULD BE SAID THAT THE BATHS, WHERE EVERYONE WAS NUDE, WERE FAR SAFER THAN OUTSIDE

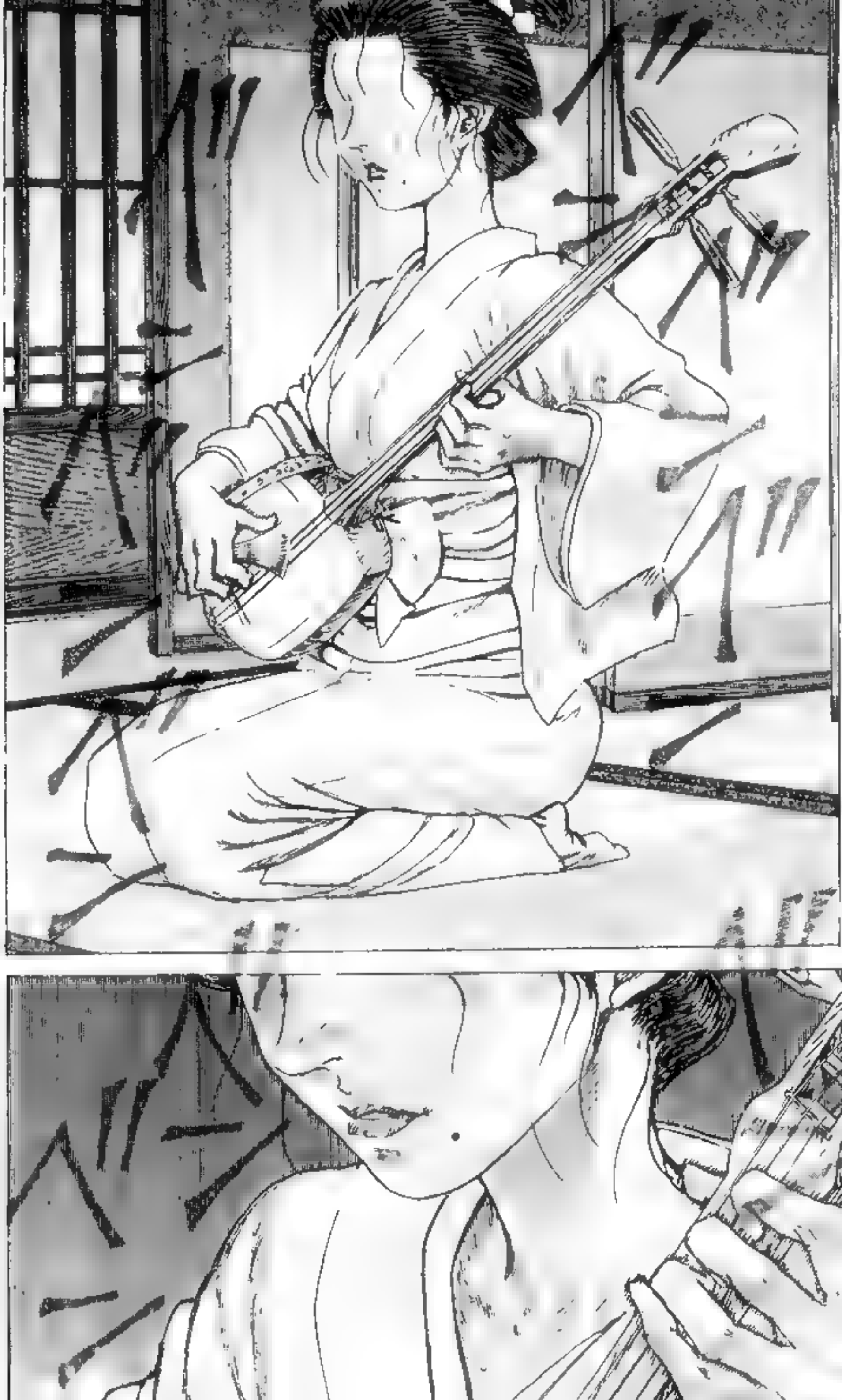




PLACE
IN AN
INSTANT



SHIZUHATA

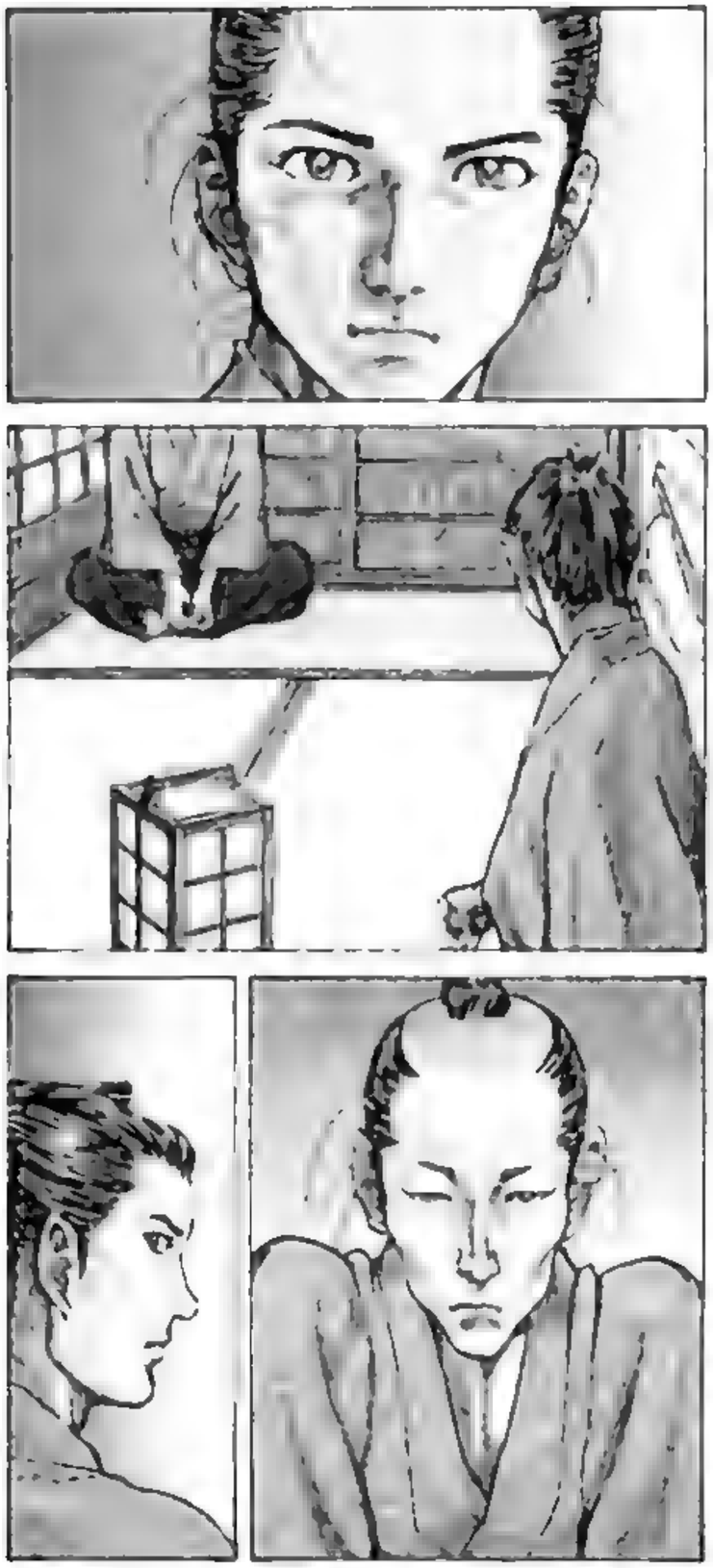


CHAPTER 20
TIGER'S CUB

HAD SEEN A MAN ENTER WITH A WEAPON

THE TIGER'S
THE CHAMBER
SET ASIDE
STUDENTS WHO
LIVED AT THE ESTATE.

THIS ROOM HAS BECOME TOO LARGE ...



EVERY DAY

THE TEETH OF THE ROUNIN HE'D SLAIN, [illegible] INTO HIS FIST, HAD CAUSED INFECTION

IT'S FESTERING ...

BELOW KAKEGAWA CASTLE

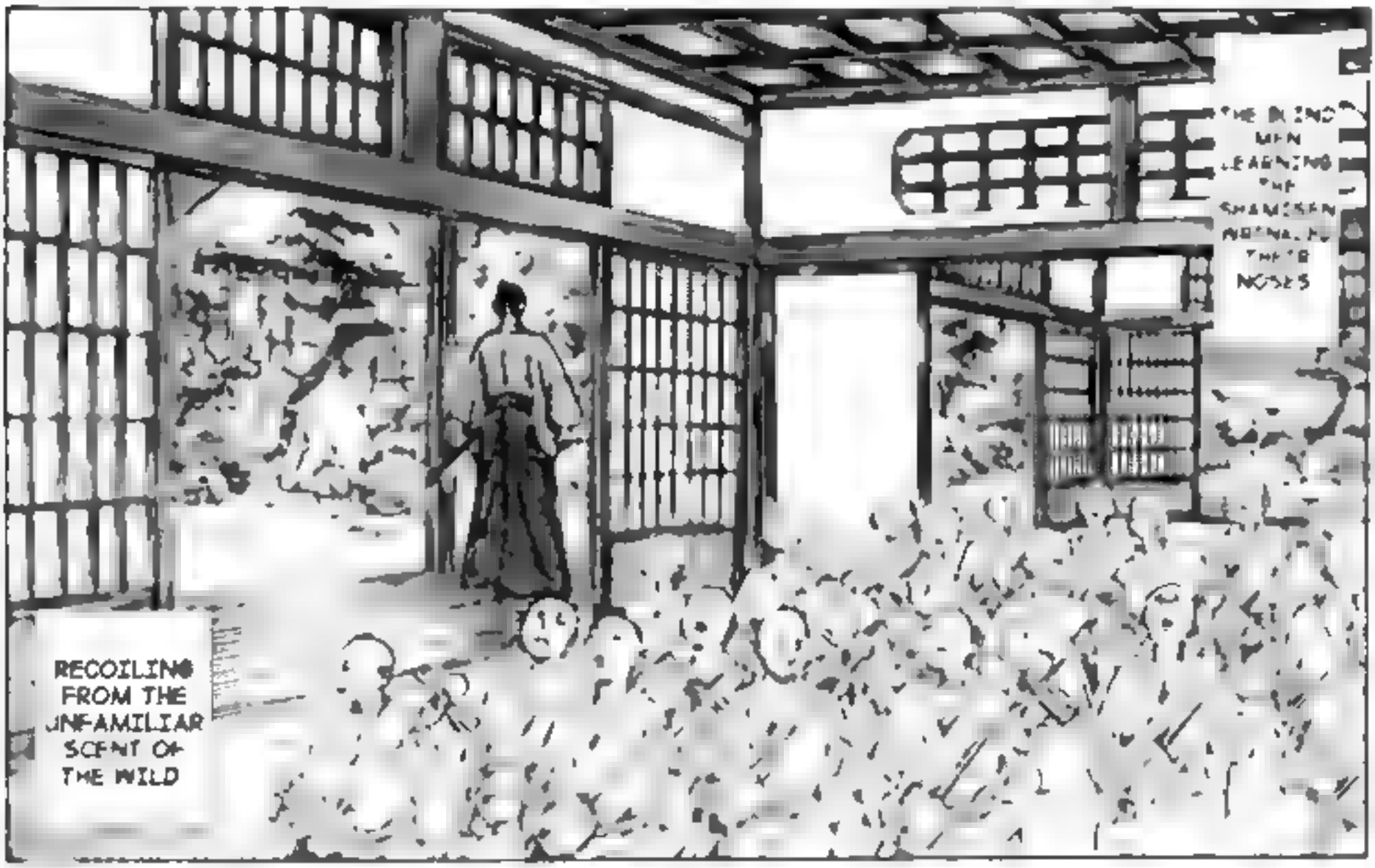
THE NEXT DAY.

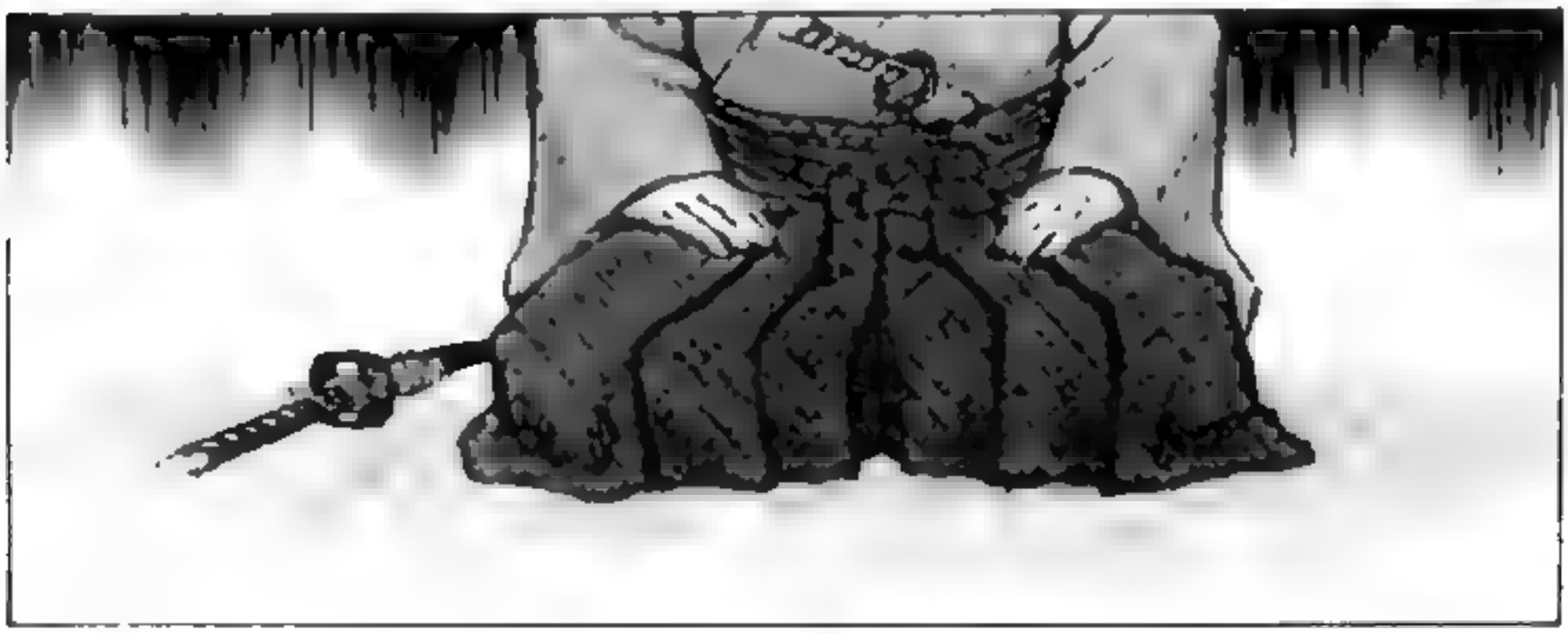
WAS NONE THER THAN THE MAN WHO HELD THE HEAVENS IN HIS GRASP SHOGUN TOKUGAWA IEYASU HIMSELF

THE ONE TO BESTOW SUCH PRESTIGE TO THE LEADER OF THE TOUDOUZA

INSIDE THIS PRIVATE [illegible] GIVEN BY THE MIGHTY SHOGUNATE ITSELF

A MAN COULD BE SEEN WALKING WITH SHABBY CLOTHES SERVED OUT OF PLACE IN THE MIDST OF SUCH LUXURY


THE BLIND MEN LEARNING THE SHAMISEN MEANS TO THEIR NOSES
RECOILING FROM THE UNFAMILIAR SCENT OF THE WILD



WELCOME.

THESE MEN WERE NOT BLIND

THE KING YOU HAD THEIR SONS BEHEADED

THE PRICE FOR THREE TIGERS.

THANK YOU.

THE REMAINING THREE WILL NOT BE AS EASY AS THE ONES UP TO NOW HAVE BEEN.

WAIT A LITTLE LONGER

WHEN CAN WE EXPECT THE NEXT THREE?

OKITSU-DONO

CORRECT.

TIGERS AMONG TIGERS YOU MEAN

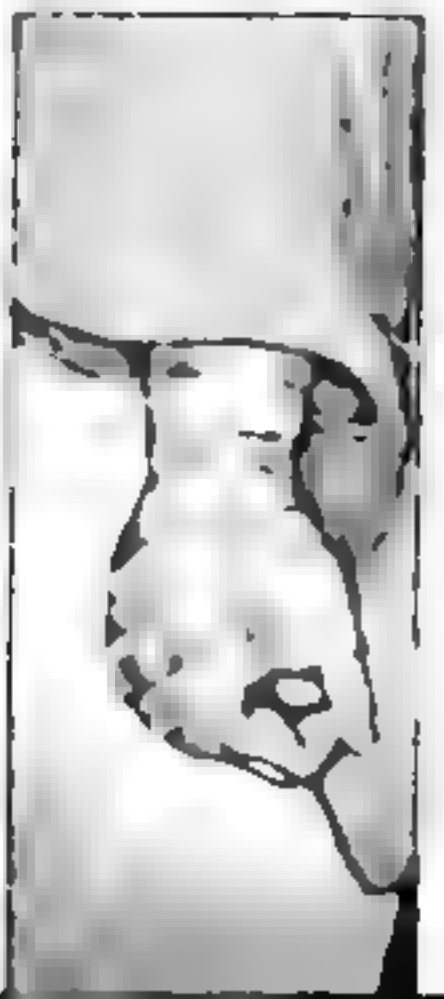
OKITSU DID NOT MENTION GENNOSUKE'S WOUND.

WHY. EVEN HE COULD NOT SAY.

OKITSU'S BLADE, BUT
THEY SAW NOTHING

BUT TO THE EYES OF THE MAN TENDING TO THE BUSHES OUTSIDE ...

ON THE SIDE OF THAT MAN'S NOSE WAS A MOLE THE SIZE OF A GRAPE



WAS IRAKO INSIDE THAT PLACE?

FUJIKI ...

ARE YOU THINKING OF SPENDING YOUR WHOLE LIFE INSIDE THE TIGER'S ROOM?

DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE A TOMORROW FOR KOGAN-RYUU?

KOGAN-RYUU'S TOMORROW ...

...LIES WITH MIE-SAMA

MIE-SAMA YOU SAY?

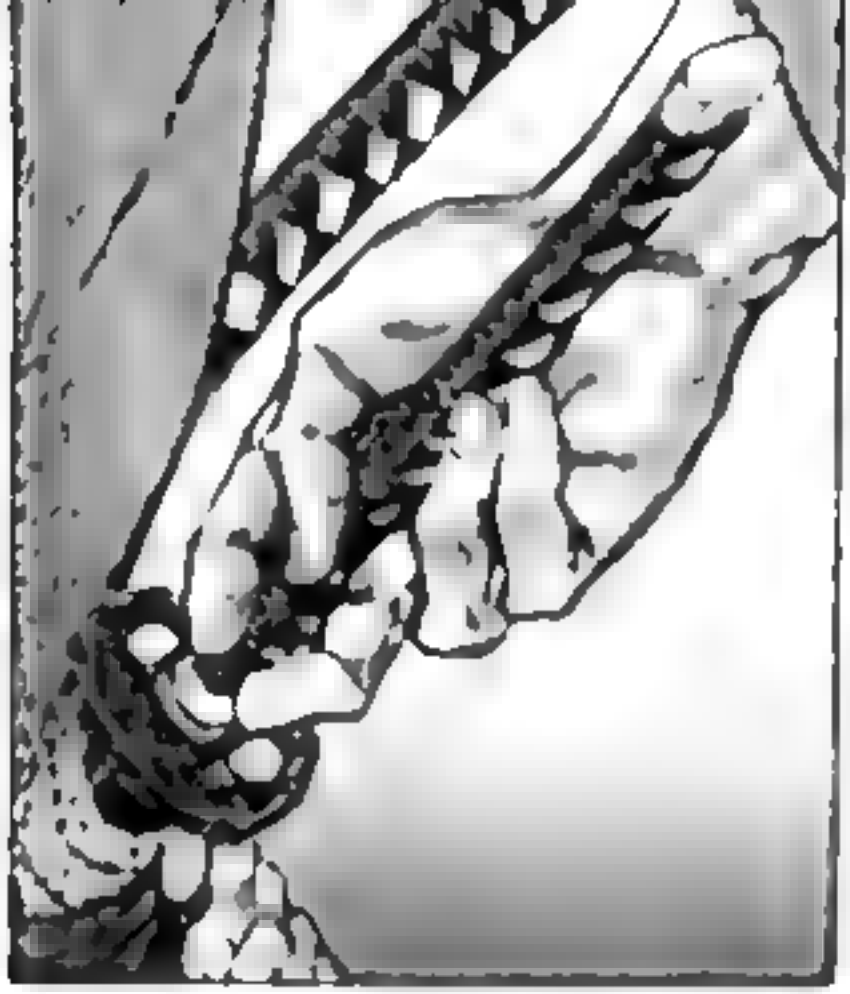
FUJIKI ...

AHAHAHAHAH

CAN NEVER AGAIN ...

NEVER ...

THE HEART ...



FUJIKI I STOLE THIS FROM YOU
THIS WAY OF HOLDING THE SWORD

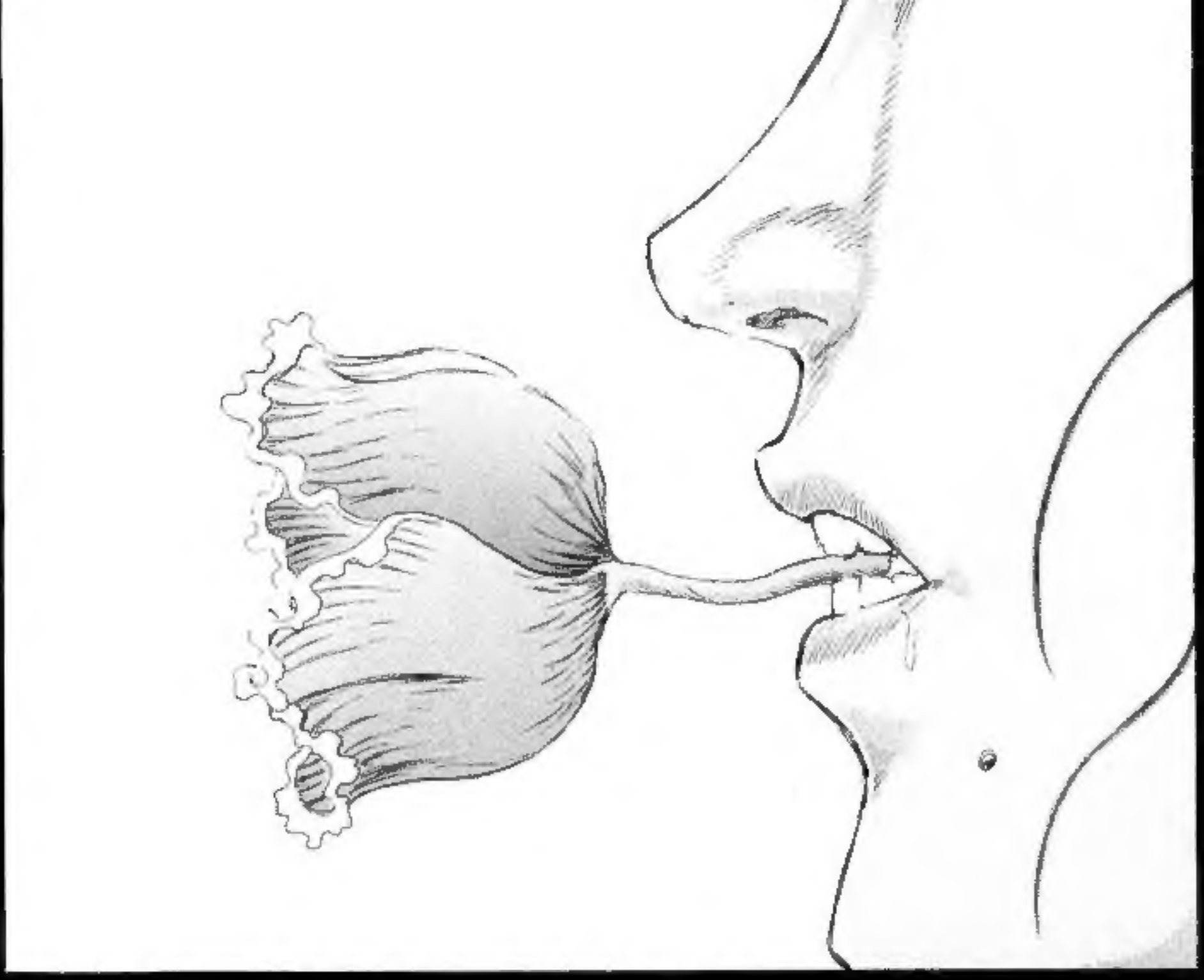
THIS WAS THE SECRET YOU SHOWED OFF WHEN YOU DEFEATED IRAKO
IT MUST HAVE BEEN INCREDIBLY HARD TO DISCOVER

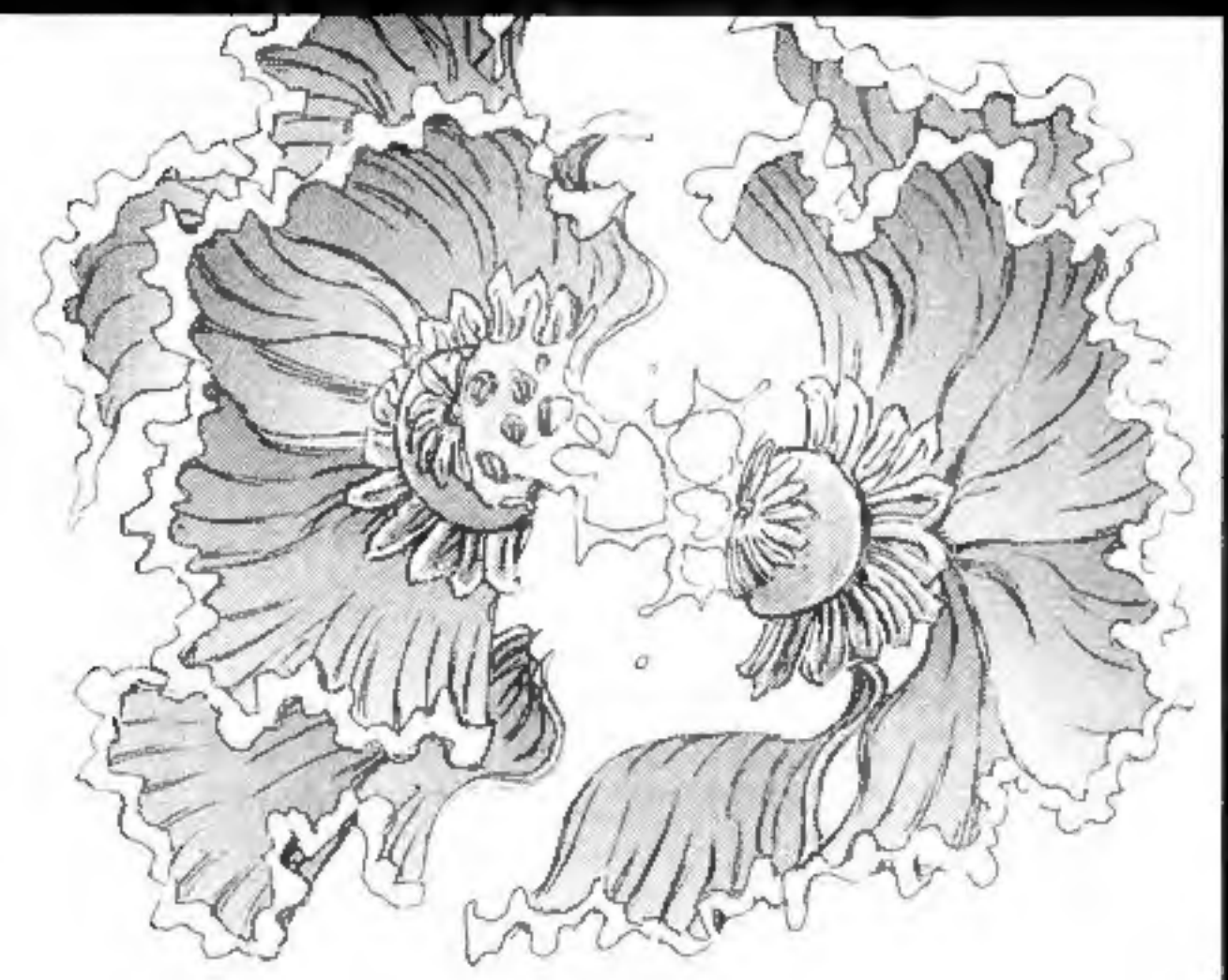
SO, WERE YOU JAX IN FILING YOU A REPORT

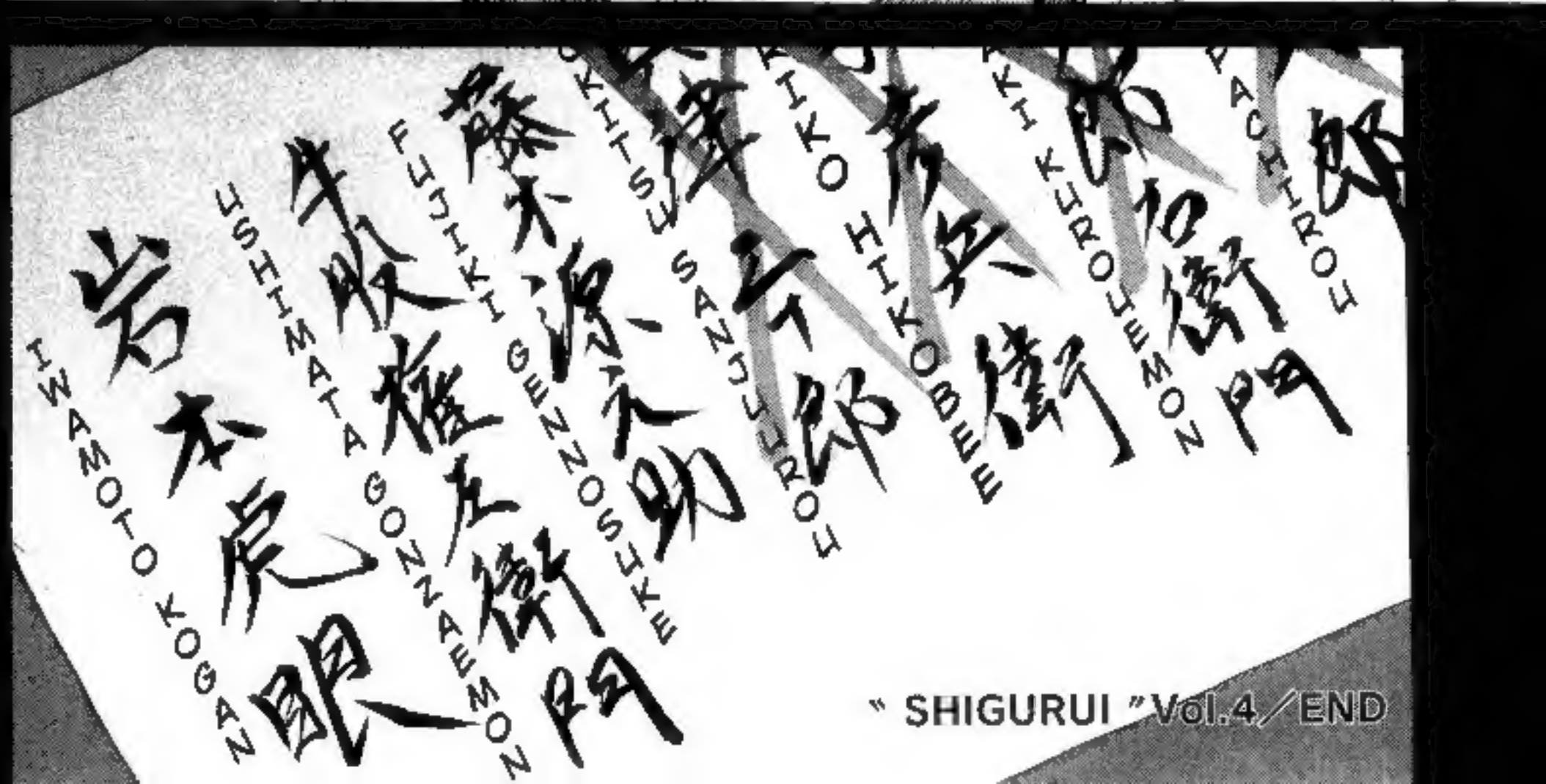
YOU'RE ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL ENTIRELY ...

IT SEEMS THE TIGER'S ROOM

...WILL TRULY BECOME LARGER, NOW.







" SHIGURUI "Vol.4／END